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"Ay, the bride of death!" she said, striking full at his heart, where her father's hunting-knife shivered to atoms.

THE AVENGING ANGELS; OR, The Bandit Brothers of the Scioto. A BORDER AND INDIAN TALE.

By the Author of "The Silent Hunter," "Queen of the Woods," etc.

CHAPTER IV. THE FOREST HOME.

AGAIN we shift the scene, this time to another portion of the land where our narrative takes place; to a spot where the oak, the beech, and the hickory still throw their giant and knotty arms in wild luxuriance, and where their bark was yet unscarred by the ax of the ruthless emigrant, and where yet they were grand in their pristine glory.

We approach a farm lying imbedded in a deep, dark, and impenetrable forest. On a slight eminence, some three hundred yards from the line of the surrounding forest, stands the homestead, or farm-house, neatly environed by a post and rail fence, inclosing some three acres of land, upon which the native growth of poplar, oak, and beech has been allowed to remain.

It was a double log-butt, of two rooms, each twenty feet square, with an open passage of the same dimensions between, all under one roof, and composed of huge logs neatly squared and hewn, with the interstices daubed with mud.

It was two stories in height, while in the rear, removed some twenty feet from the main building, was the kitchen. The room to the left was lit up both by fire and candles, and within this we will enter. It is decorated with many trophies of the chase and rifle, interspersed with numerous nets, fishing-poles, hunting-horns, and other instruments for the destruction and taking of game.

In a large arm-chair beside the fire sat a man of imposing exterior and stalwart frame. His form was athletic, almost gigantic—just six feet two; with a broad, full, and powerful bust, a majestic face, and dark hair tinged with gray, cut short, and curling over a massive brow.

On a stool close to his feet sat a girl, who had just passed her sixteenth year, and was now a blushing flower in her seventeenth spring. Her face, bright and happy with health, adorned and set off by a laughing blue eye, and glowing with a soft, transparent, flushing tinge that no art could imitate, was shaded and beautified by long, light auburn hair, curling and sweeping without ornament around her lovely throat.

Her form was neither too delicate nor too robust, neither too fragile nor too stout, but just the proper medium.

Rather taller than the average of women, she was ever most graceful and active, and walked with the quick springy tread of a young fawn, with her head proudly erect, and her bright blue eyes dancing merrily around, as if in search of enjoyment.

Near a window, reading, is an older girl. She is tall, slim, and graceful; her light-brown hair, long and silky, is braided round a head of most classic beauty; her forehead, high and projecting, gives assurance of great intellect, while her lips and brow denote firmness and energy; her eye is neither black nor blue, nor can it be called gray, but is rather a shade between black and dark gray, or what is commonly called nut-brown hazel; her nose is aquiline, with nostril full and expansive.

She is all in all a splendid beauty. Reclining on a couch is a middle-aged lady, whom, at a glance, any one can recognize as the mother of the two young ladies.

And yet these are some of the pioneers who have gone forth to cultivate and clear a new and unknown district.

"I wish the boys were in," said the mother; "this is no time to be out."

"They have been caught in the storm," replied the father, "and have taken shelter in some cavern, or other cache."

Again silence, the mother deeply sighing, as she thought of other days.

The gentleman who occupied the residence which we have endeavored to describe, was one who had enjoyed great wealth and distinction in the inhabited part of the colonies, and whom his fellow-citizens were proud to see taking a high post in their midst.

He was one of those who, however, always looked forward to an ultimate return to the land of his birth; and so, though he amassed large possessions in lands and houses in America, England held the greater part of his wealth.

But as he grew older other feelings influenced him. He became attached to the land of his adoption; his habits became fixed; hunting and fishing, on a scale not practicable in an old country, became his passion; and he determined to extend his own property in America, while giving his sons, as they grew up, the means of acquiring homes for themselves.

But he had transmitted most of his funds

to England, even mortgaging his colonial estates to increase his store.

And now all this must be got back. How was it to be done?—his wife and children revolting against the idea of his fetching it himself.

He looked around him. There was one friend—a Mr. Edwards, an eminent lawyer, also a magistrate, whose orphan nephew was affianced to his own daughter Ella. Him he consulted. Without a moment's hesitation he offered to go himself, having long desired to do so.

The judge pressed his hands, thanked him cordially, and gave him every necessary power to act for him.

He started, and from that day—now two years—nothing had been heard of him.

The judge could find no trace of him. He had reached England, gone to Paris, returned to London, and then all trace of him was lost.

The judge was ruined. Without a word he gave up his possessions to the mortgagees, collected such household goods around him as remained to him, and started secretly and by night for a new land where he might never again see the false and deceitful face of man.

And young Roland Edwards, the old lawyer's nephew, Judge Mason spurned from his door, with scorn and contumely.

With two married laborers and the daughter of one, he managed soon to get a home around him; and though he could not hope to regain his former station, still he would, if years were spared him, be able to leave his children a fine estate in a land which literally flowed with milk and honey—the Blue Lick region of Kentucky.

It was the evening after the storm when we introduce our new characters. They were seated after supper, talking as usual, each following the bent of his own fancy.

The labors of the day were done.

Ettie, taking her straw hat, started out, as if for a walk.

"Be careful, little one," said her admiring father, "or we shall have some red-skin taking you away to his wigwam."

"I should like to see him," said Ettie, laughing. "I will but run and help Martha for half an hour, and then come back."

And she went out into the silent night, tripping like a fairy under the pine-wood forest.

About ten minutes later, Mrs. Mason, rising, looked forth upon the lawn-like meadow bordering the house.

A low shriek escaped her lips. Husband and child were in an instant by her side, and looking in the direction to which she pointed.

Five tall figures, in Indian costume, were advancing, gun in hand, creeping under the trees, as if to conceal their persons.

"Heaven protect us!" cried the judge, solemnly; "the bloody heathen are upon us!"

The judge put up the heavy bar.

The log-house to which this family had transferred themselves after their departure from the colony, was built with due regard to security and strength. At no great distance from the house had been a knoll covered by pines fourteen or fifteen inches in diameter and a hundred feet high; these had been felled, cut into lengths of between twenty or thirty feet, notched at the ends, and rolled alternately on each other, so as to inclose an area that was one-third longer than it was wide.

The windows were merely transverse bars, with heavy oaken shutters. The roof was strongly made of poles, over which they had laid the bark of the hemlock.

The door was made of riven logs, that were pinned together with cross-pieces, with the usual wooden hinges.

"A thievish-looking gang, truly," said the judge, thoughtfully; "but we can hold out until the boys return. Where is Ettie?"

Mother and daughter exchanged a terrified glance.

"Gone down to the Blue Spring to see Martha," faltered Ella.

"God help her!" said the judge, fervently. "I will go up and hold parley with these scoundrels. Open to no one, save when I tell you."

And taking a brace of pistols and a heavy rifle he went up-stairs. Scarcely was his back turned when by a simultaneous impulse the mother and daughter armed themselves.

In the history of border heroism women play a noble and glorious part.

The lights had been blown out, and having thus prepared themselves, the women sat down.

Meanwhile the judge had ascended to his room, whence, through a narrow loop-hole, he looked upon the scene below. All was stillness and peace. The trees waved gently; under the influence of the night air the moon and starlight sky illumined the peaceful and pleasant landscape, for such the clearing was, with its dark fringe of forest in the rear.

The trees which had been left standing were, with the exception of one or two small ones, at some distance from the house, as in that wilderness an attack was hourly to be expected. Right in front of the judge's window was a large oak, and beneath this the five men were clearly collected, though their forms were but shadowy in the gloom.

Presently, however, one of the party, whose stature appeared gigantic through the thin mist which rose from the fertile earth, approached the house with the jaunty air of an honest trapper or hunter, and knocked at the door.

"House, there!"

"What seek you?" replied the deep voice of the judge. "Who and what are you?"

"A poor hunter, having lost his way in the woods, craves hospitality for the night."

"Why do your companions skulk under

yonder tree? Begone, villain, lest I send a bullet through your brain. White Indians, away! I give shelter to no such ruffians," cried the angry father.

"I say, old fellow," replied the man, after taking shelter within the covered court, "none of your tricks upon travelers. If we are five, the more the merrier. I thought so many all at once might scare you, so came on alone. Now open, for we can't stop here all night."

"Go whence you came. I open no door of mine to-night," was the decisive reply, and the judge closed the shutter of the loop-hole.

"Won't you?" muttered the ruffian, who then gave a shrill whistle, that brought his companions whooping across the greensward like a party of demons hounding their prey.

"Well," said Mo, in a low voice, that smote like an icicle on the old man's heart.

"I know them now," he said to himself, with a shudder, "and Heaven in its infinite mercy spare me and mine! My poor Ettie!" he added, with a convulsive shudder.

He listened again. The men had retired within the covered yard, which, having its back to the north, was also boarded up in the rear, and formed indeed a summer room for meals and for lounging in fine weather.

The judge moved across his room, opened the door of an inner one, containing two beds, and crossed it.

A small room looked out on the forest in the rear. As he put his head through, a soft, musical voice, singing in a low tone, as if half scared by the gloom, was heard upon the skirt of the forest, not twenty yards from the log.

A tremendous hammering at the front door at the same instant made her pause.

"Hist! Ettie, darling," said the agonized parent.

"Father?"

"Hist! speak low! Go back, take Martha, retire to the Red Tree Glen, and there remain hidden. Tell Robert and John we are attacked by white Indians. God bless you—go!"

And the judge, having seen that his darling had implicitly obeyed him, retired from that window and went to his own.

"If you do not leave my door, I will fire upon you," he said, sternly.

"Fire away," was the brutal reply; "two can play at that game."

Without hesitation he fired at the nearest ruffian, who dropped his rifle with a hideous yell. The rest disappeared round the corner, dragging the wounded man with them.

The judge closed the bars of his loophole and went down-stairs, where he found his brave wife and daughter, pale but resolute. A faint smile crossed his lips, as he saw them armed and accoutered.

"We can hold out until morning, papa," said Ella, with a proud smile; "then Horace and James will be here, I know."

"My darling, I will not deceive you. If the villains were Indians we might, as at the first repulse they would retire or wait for reinforcements; but these are five renegades, notorious horse-thieves, and murderers. We must fight to the last gasp."

"But would they not take a bribe?" cried Mrs. Mason. "Could you not buy the wretches off?"

"Perhaps," murmured the judge, scarcely knowing that he spoke.

"Then why not parley? Give them all we have."

"Including our daughters?" hissed the old man in his wife's ears. "These men I know. Their villainies are beyond description. No, old wife—partner of my bosom—unless Providence sends us aid this night, we must die."

Mrs. Mason looked at him with a bewildered air, and then all her mother's feelings rushed to her heart.

With a dark and menacing frown she clutched her gun. She felt the courage of a lioness.

"But Ettie!" she gasped, after a moment.

"Is safe. I sent her to a safe hiding-place," replied the father. "Be ready to act as I tell you; and now," he whispered to his wife, "give her such a faint hint as a maiden may hear, and then to your posts."

As he spoke the stalwart old man drew softly a small slide which masked an oblique loophole, and peered into the covered yard. The men had gone, but a truck had gone with them.

He turned round with a sigh, as if fully aware of the accumulated horrors he had to expect that night; as he did so, his eyes fell upon his eldest daughter. She was deadly pale, but stood with flashing eyes and haughty mien gazing at some imaginary intruder. Then, through her white lips hissed:

"Death before dishonor!"

"The villains would fire the log," he said, with as much calmness as possible, "but we will thwart them. When you hear the wretches without and when I fire, discharge your rifles—and God defend the right."

CHAPTER V. THE BANDIT'S BRIDE.

WHEN the judge ascended to his post and looked out upon the night, all was still. The men who had so rudely demanded his hospitality were nowhere to be seen, and had he known them for less than the wretches they were, he might have hoped to have been quit of them. But Judge Mason entertained no such delusion. He knew that though for a moment out of sight, they were at their fiendish work—work which they understood but too well.

A dozen fearful murders, accompanied by every circumstance characteristic of fiends, proved their true character.

For some time, however, the weary sen-

try, for he was weary with fearful thoughts, saw nothing, and he began almost to wish it his heart. Meanwhile a wondrous change had come over the scene. For some time the judge had remarked a dark look in the sky, had noticed the swift big clouds, and was assured that one of those storms which come and go with such wondrous rapidity was at hand.

He was right.

In a few minutes it burst with tremendous fury upon the wild wilderness; the sky grew black, a lurid glow hung about the edge of the clouds, whose jagged outlines swept the elements in fury along, and then a flash of lightning proclaimed that Heaven's artillery was at work.

Then all again was still. The squall, or perhaps the tail-end of a great storm, had passed over.

The judge rubbed his eyes as if he had been dreaming, for directly beneath him were the five ruffians, cowering down their burdens of wood, boughs, leaves, and other combustibles, at the door, forming at once a dangerous heap.

The use of the truck was now revealed. It was loaded with split logs of pine, which lay for the family on a pile at no great distance from the house.

The judge frowned darkly. He knew that the fire about to be made would be a formidable one, but perhaps as formidable to his enemies as to himself, for the smoke and blaze might bring assistance when least expected.

The door was strong, and the logs of the hut were so compact that the fire would be a long time doing its hellish work.

But now the pile is ready, and the men, with reckless laughter, prepare the instruments which are to set it in a blaze. They stand in a kind of circle, and a sound of frantic shouts, each of the ruffians waves a blazing pine-branch on high, and rushes to his work.

Ping! and one falls prostrate on the earth.

Ping! ping! and two others bite the dust.

The torches lie on the ground smoldering, while the abashed ruffians, assisting their wounded comrades to rise, bear them off to a distance, and all again is still. This silence lasted about ten minutes, when the silence of the night was broken by the rapid discharge of rifles against the house. The judge, who was anxiously watching, narrowly escaped, as a bullet struck the loop-hole and frame. The judge descended once more to see to the welfare of his beloved charges, whom he found calm, pale, and resolute. The volley of rifles had started them, but when they heard the bullets sink in the wood their anxiety ceased.

"Was any one hit?" asked Mrs. Mason.

"Every bullet struck its mark. They have retreated with their wounded," replied the judge.

The women shuddered at the thought of having shed human blood, but showed no signs of failing courage. On the contrary, they seemed to clutch their arms with renewed energy, now they knew that their fate was partly in their own hands.

"Hist!" said the judge, moving quickly to the side on the side of the inclosed yard. He was not quick enough, though he thought he saw a shadow on the ground as of a man crawling.

He ascended once more to his bedroom, which, as in most houses of a similar character, intended for defense as well as shelter, projected over the lower story. A chink wide enough for observation ran about two feet along the floor.

Judge Mason now saw one of the ruffians take a torch and cast it among the dry leaves. In an instant the smaller twigs ignited, the flame darted from branch to branch, until a large portion of the pile was crackling and snapping in a bright blaze.

The bandit then fled again unharmed, despite a hurried volley.

The flames mounted, and a forked stream shot up through the chink, sucked up by the draught; the whole room was illumined, and yet the judge moved not.

At last, however, he rolled the large keg of water, always full for use, to the spot, and with a hearty blow of his iron heel, knocked out the top.

A loud hiss, a choking rush of smoke and steam, and the fiery blaze below had vanished.

A yell of rage from the balked assailants proclaimed their fury at the old man's tactics. It was quite evident that, unless they acted with redoubled energy, the gallant father would hold out until morning, when help might arrive, and make the match more even.

Presently a fearful thought almost paralyzed the energies of the old man. If Ettie had escaped and joined Martha, why had his laborers—whom he knew to be brave and experienced backwoodsmen—why had they not come to the rescue? With their assistance he would have sallied forth to meet the bandits.

But with a silent prayer to the Giver of all good, the worthy judge proceeded to fulfill the duties of the moment without allowing himself to be distracted by any other thoughts. Again he looked for the ruffians, until once more they advanced, by some hidden means carrying before them a pile of brush and light fuel in shape like a haystack.

They had lashed transverse poles across the truck, and piling it up as high as they could, had pushed it forward by the sheer strength of their gigantic frames.

"Look out!" whispered the judge, through the open flooring.

The truck was now suddenly impelled forward at a run, upset against the door, with its load of dry boughs, leaves, and grass, collected with fiendish perseverance.

At the same moment torches were cast upon the pile, which instantly blazed up with fearful energy, while the authors of the abominable attack went away, shrieking, yelling, and laughing.

The three defenders fired, and savage curses told that again the villains were wounded. But as yet not one had paid by death the just forfeit of his misdeeds.

"Bring up water," said the old man; "every drop you can."

At this moment a lurid, forked stream of fire rose, almost like a rocket from the pile, causing it to burn with intense brightness. A general hail of brandy had cracked in the flames, and spread itself abroad on the huge bonfire.

Having discovered that, after expending every drop of water in the house, they could not extinguish the flames, the judge proceeded to barricade the door to about five feet high with every movable article of furniture in the place, resolved to allow no chance to escape him.

"The door is of dry and seasoned wood," he said, "and will soon burn; the logs will

hold longer. When the villains have destroyed that barrier, we will stand by this barricade to the death."

"To the death!" said Ella, with the enthusiasm of a martyr.

"To the death!" repeated Mrs. Mason, embracing her family.

At the end of the room was a kind of ladder, where the old man directed his wife to retreat to, while Ella placed in the dark shadow of the fireplace. He posted himself at the foot of the stairs. It was time.

The floor of the room was now smoldering, and the smoke and flames were driving them to their various posts. They would have been choked, but the smoke escaped rapidly through the chinks into the bedrooms above.

Each of the defenders of that imperiled home had two guns. Mrs. Mason had a rifle and light fowling-piece; Ella had two rifles; her father a heavy rifle and once carbine, besides pistols. There was ample ammunition, of course, as no borderman ever was unprovided with that valuable commodity which, in the vast solitudes of prairie and forest, is his chief dependence.

The crackling of the serpent-like flames, the roaring of the bonfire without, the spitting and sputtering of the damp wood, were all that now broke the silence, when a heavy blow resounded against the door and it flew into splinters, revealing to the inmates of the house a cavernous mouth of fire.

They could all clearly see the hideous blackened faces of the ruffians, peering anxiously across the glowing embers.

"Come out, you judge of—!" roared the infuriated elder brother; "come forth ere we smoke you out."

No answer.

"By jingo!" said one, "what's up? There's no back door, sure-ly. But no, I've crawled all round, and there ain't. The folks is gone up-stairs. Hurrah, boys! The castle's all our own!"

And dashing the fast-sinking fire down with their heavy boots, they rushed at the frail barricade.

Three sheets of flame, three reports, and the villains, again wounded, held back.

"Give them no time to load!" roared Mo, dashing at the defenses; "take them all alive!"

And as he spoke he prepared to clear the defenses at a bound.

Again three flashes, again three reports, and the lumbering giant fell back into the arms of his companions.

"Waste no time—load!" said the husky voice of the judge.

Then was heard the sound of ramrods, the cocking of guns, and again all was still. The assailants had drawn off, evidently puzzled at this obstinate defense, which by some mysterious accident, though it had severely wounded all the ruffians, had not yet taken a life.

"Look out!"

A sudden discharge of guns followed this cry, and then a whole arsenal of fire was cast within the large room in the hope of distracting the besieged; but none wasted a shot. Every eye was fixed on the door, ready to greet the first invader with the reception he deserved.

Suddenly the judge uttered a wild cry of anguish, and would have turned, but before he could do so he was pinioned from behind by two powerful arms, and hurried to the ground.

One of the brothers had, during the uproar, climbed by means of a tree-cut for the purpose—to the roof, and made his way stealthily down-stairs, taking the gallant and unfortunate judge by surprise.

But he was not done with yet. He was still a tall and powerful man, and the other, though younger, found his match.

"Keep the fiends at bay—I will master this scoundrel," cried the judge, in a choked voice.

The spellbound women made no reply, but leaning on their guns, gazed with awe upon the fearful scene before them. The fire on the hearth burned low, the blaze near the door was out, the hut was almost in total darkness.

The herculean struggle continued, and at length, with a cry of joy, the women saw the father uppermost, kneeling on the other's breast, who lay still and motionless.

"To your guns!" roared the agonized parent.

Too late. While this awful scene of the tragedy had been going on, the other ruffians had glided like shadows into the room, and when the two brave women again prepared for defense, their guns were knocked from their hands and they were prisoners.

In five minutes more, the house, already on fire in several places, above, was burning below, the dry planks having finally caught fire.

But to a post in the center of the covered yard, with the flames of both his houses sending forth their forked tongues as if to lick him, was safely bound Judge Mason.

At his feet, wounded, half-fainting, half-dead, crouched his wife.

Ella stood pale, ghastly, with a lurid glance in her eyes, held by the wrists by two stalwart ruffians, in whose hands she was but a child.

Mo and two others looked on with dark and lowering brows.

"And so, Judge Mason, we have you now. The men you outraged and debased are your masters. What say you now?"

"Nothing," said the old man. "Take all I have—punish me as you will—but spare my child."

"All you have," sneered Mo; "you have nothing here."

"Nothing here," continued the old man, whose eyes were ever on his daughter, "but I have much elsewhere. I was a very rich man once, and not a poor one now. But, who brings gold into the wilderness? Wait and you shall have rich ransom—only spare my child."

"We can not wait," said Mo, moodily, with a significant glance at his men, "but answer me a question. Where is the young one?"

"Safe! safe!" cried the judge, fury flashing in his eyes.

"Infernal old fool!" roared Mo. "The girl shall and will be found; she was here last night. Where is she now? Answer me, lest I tear your tongue out."

The bandits dragged Ella violently from the yard; the poor old man howled with rage; the dying mother groaned.

"Hold—one moment," said Ella, in a perfectly calm tone of voice.

All stood still, amazed.

"Am I to understand that my sacrifice will save them?" she said, in a hollow voice. Mo, with a sinister smile, replied:

"I wish to torture him; life is torture under the circumstances."

"Look at me," said Ella, with a cold smile on her lips; "unhand me first. I thank you. Look at me, sir bandit. Am I one to flinch? am I one to hesitate? have I not fought bravely? Speak, I ask you."

"Like a she-devil!" was the reply.

"Well—fit mate for devils. You wish to make me the sacrifice—let it be so. I will sacrifice myself—but on two conditions: you save them, and let me choose amongst you my mate, who shall then protect me against all."

The bandits gazed at one another with mingled terror, admiration and doubt. They began to see in her one worthy of themselves.

"Choose," said Mo.

"First, let me kiss my father," she replied, "I shall not dare to afterward."

No opposition was made to this proposition, and Ella, with a firm and unhesitating step, approached the judge, whose countenance was awful to behold. Could he, would have spared her.

She kissed him coldly on the forehead, and then clung wildly around him.

Then turning round, she looked fixedly at the bandits, as if scrutinizing their countenances.

Suddenly she pointed her finger to Mo.

"Ha! ha! not a bad judge," laughed the giant; "and so, thou art my bride?"

"Ay, the bride of death!" she said, striking full at his heart, where her father's hunting-knife shivered to atoms.

With a maniacal laugh the girl sunk insensible on the ground—at the mercy of her deadly foes.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 55.)

The Blackfoot Queen:

OR, OLD NICK WHIFFLES IN THE VALLEY OF DEATH.

A Sequel to "The Phantom Princess."

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS, AUTHOR OF "THE PHANTOM PRINCESS; OR, NED HAZEL, THE BOY TRAPPER."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SLEEPING SCOUT.

ADVANCING a few steps nearer to Nick Whiffles, the lovers saw what was now the cause of alarm. Directly ahead of them, and seemingly in the path itself, they plainly saw the gleam of a camp-fire.

It was plain that the old trapper was somewhat puzzled over this. Certain at once that there was some deep design in it, he was at a loss to comprehend what the design was. Common opinion would have pronounced this to be the regular camp-fire of the Blackfeet, but even Mackintosh knew that such a thing was extremely improbable; for the Indians were not in camp, and would not kindle a fire in the vicinity of an enemy, unless it was intended to be used as some means to decoy them into destruction.

So the party paused, for a few minutes, while Nick cautiously approached to reconnoiter. He went nearer and nearer, until no more than a hundred feet separated him from it, and prudence warned him against going further.

He then saw that the fire was burning directly in the path, but there was no sign of any person near; but, satisfied that there must be some one, he waited and watched. Something like a half-hour had passed, and the fire was sensibly diminishing when an Indian suddenly came to view out of the darkness, and throwing quite a large quantity of sticks and brush upon the flames, retreated to the shelter of the forest again. Nick waited and watched, expecting to see others, but none at all were visible, and it was evident that this was the only Blackfoot in the immediate vicinity.

With his remarkable sagacity, Nick now began to comprehend what all this meant. The Blackfeet were taking pains to keep the fire burning, expecting that it would perhaps catch the eye of the fugitives wandering in the vicinity. They would be apt naturally to drift into the path, and seeing the fire would make a detour to avoid it. On each side of the fire, and at some distance in the wood, there were doubtless Indian sentinels on the alert to discover, and instantly make known their whereabouts to the Indians searching for them.

This was Nick's theory of what he saw, although, at the same time, he saw that it was no very brilliant strategy, and the chances of its success were quite remote; but it had its danger, nevertheless, and he turned back to warn his companions.

The natural course that now suggested itself was for the party to leave the path altogether, and, pursuing a course at right angles to it, make directly for the ridge over which they were so desirous of passing.

This was done with only a moment's delay, necessary for a complete understanding of the movement. The Indians seemed still on every side of them, and too much caution could not be exercised in every movement made. The keenness of Calamity was invaluable, and he had already been the means of saving them from capture more than once.

"We're in a condemned difficulty yet," remarked Nick, as they stepped out of the path; "it's hard traveling over these rocks, and if you ain't blamed careful the varmints'll hear you, too."

"You mustn't go too fast," admonished Miona; "two or three times I came near losing you."

"I'll take care of that," was the reply; "are you good for a long tramp?"

"I am good for any exertion that will get us out of this dangerous place," she answered; "it seems that we are making no progress at all."

"We ain't much, sartin. How do you stand it, Ned? Are you bout ready to give up?"

"I will notify you, Nick, when I need rest," laughed Ned. "I am somewhat tired, but my only trouble is drowsiness. You know I haven't slept for two nights, and if I stand still for ten minutes, I find my eyes getting heavy."

"You must fight it off, for we ain't going to have any time to sleep to-night. Wait till we get where there's a chance, and you may sleep for a week. Come ahead now, and mind what I said 'bout making a noise; it seems to me that's a hundred of the varmints skulking all round us."

Again they moved forward, taking a route that was much more difficult to follow than the other. Here and there the woods were so full of dense undergrowth that they were forced to pick their way with great carefulness, or else to change their course entirely; then again huge rocks interposed, causing the same difficulty; but the trapper still maintained his general direction, advancing

closer and closer to the ridge on the north-east of them.

The sky was clear, and while they were passing along in this manner, the moon appeared above the ridge behind them, casting a dim light over the forest, and helping them on their way at the same time that it also increased the danger of their being seen by the Indians, who were leaving no stone unturned to detect and capture them, while Calamity was never more alert and keener-sighted. So long as he gave no sign of disturbance, a certain feeling of security was with all, it was only when the shadow of apprehension that the lovers apprehended serious trouble.

No little progress was made in this direction, and the reaction of hope was strong with all, when, as if to remind them they were doomed beyond all question, Nick Whiffles exclaimed:

"By mighty! if we ain't runnin' afoul of another of their infernal camp-fires; do you observe that?"

As he spoke, he pointed into the wood, where the well-known glimmer was distinguishable, directly ahead of them, and in such a position that had they continued their progress they could not have saved themselves from running directly into it.

Again the veteran trapper was nonplussed. Why this second camp-fire should be kindled was a puzzle to him, as there was no reason certainly for the Blackfeet to think that they were going to run against it. It might be, however, that there were a dozen of these same camp-fires burning here and there through the valley, and this was only a part of a plan that was intended to prevent the possibility of their escape from the valley.

The first question of course was what was to be done, and Nick answered it by proposing a different course of procedure.

"Ned, you haven't forgot the way you used to steal through the woods—I can see that, the way you've managed since you've been with me—so I'm going to let you run your own show on one side, while I take the other."

"And I am to approach it from the front, I suppose," said Miona, with a laugh.

"I want you to stay exactly where you are till we come back to you," was the reply.

"There ain't no way," said Mackintosh, adjusting it about her shoulders; "you can wrap it about you, and, as you must be quite drowsy, you can obtain the much-needed slumber."

"You are sure you will know where to find me?" remarked the girl, doubtfully, to Nick.

"You needn't think nothin' of that; all you've got to do is, to cuddle down with the blanket about you, say your prayers and go to sleep."

Mackintosh kissed her good-by, and, with a fond word or two to the men moved away.

"Now," said Ned, "I want to understand precisely what is expected of me."

"Wal, then, I want you to go within 'bout a hundred feet of that fire, on your right, and I'll go the same on the left, and we'll keep on till we meet on 't'other side."

"Suppose we miss each other, shall we take our old style of whistle? I think I haven't forgotten to make that."

"We mustn't lose each other, Ned."

"But the thing is possible, Nick, and a wise General prepares for all known contingencies before going into battle."

"There ain't no be any whistling or signaling between us at all. If you get off the track, I'll set the pup to huntin' you, and I think he'll scent you out, if you climb a tree."

"Ah! I forgot Calamity!" replied Ned, as he stooped and patted the head of the faithful brute. "What would we do, if it wasn't for him? All right, then. I think I understand my part."

A few more words were exchanged, that the two might make sure that they understood each other, and then they separated. Nick Whiffles thus doing what all military science would commend, dividing his force in the face of an enemy, but under the circumstances, he was justified in his strategy, as the efficient part of his company were merely thrown forward as "scrimishers," and with the purpose of feeling the foe.

Nick, as may well remark, completed his part of the reconnaissance, as a matter of course, without difficulty, but a most singular experience was that of Ned Mackintosh, as I shall now proceed to show.

The training of five years before could never be eradicated from the young man, and, with something like amusement, he saw himself moving forward with the caution, stealth and celerity of a veteran scout.

He constantly glanced toward the camp-fire; and, as he advanced farther and farther, he became aware that it was not a "dummy," like the one he had passed some time before, but that there were men near it. He could see figures occasionally moving between him and the blaze, which flamed up irregularly, as though it was being fed by those around it.

Such being the case, Mackintosh felt that it was his duty to make a closer inspection of the party. His position might be such as to give him a better opportunity than Nick, and he decided upon making as close an approach to the fire as was possible.

Following the custom of scouts at such times, he sunk down on his hands and knees, and began creeping stealthily forward.

There was a sort of fascination in this, as he remembered to have felt when a boy, while he was stealing upon some game, and he drew nearer and nearer, until prudence warned him that it would not do to go any further, and he paused.

He was now lying flat upon his face, his eyes fixed keenly upon the blaze, watching the figures that occasionally flitted to view, intent only upon learning what he could learn, while he became sensible of the old feeling of drowsiness creeping upon him.

What should he do? Regular as he had been in his habits, it was impossible for him to fight off the insidious approach of the "restorer," which never seemed so sweet, so balmy, so tempting as then.

"Shall I retreat, and move about until I gain command of myself?" he asked, as he debated the danger in his own mind.

Then he concluded that if he went further away from the camp-fire, he would put himself in a position where he could learn nothing at all regarding the Indians, and his reconnaissance would then be a failure altogether.

By this time, Mackintosh was in that reckless state of mind, which immediately precedes slumber, and in which he cares very little how wags the world, and is only anxious that his slumbers be not disturbed.

Two minutes later, as he lay stretched out upon the ground, he was sound asleep.

Fortunately for Ned Mackintosh, his position was such that he breathed freely and easily, so that there was no danger of his presence being betrayed by that means alone.

He was so close to the camp-fire, that it only needed to throw his rays somewhat further to strike his prostrate and unconscious form, for he was as oblivious of his danger, as though he were across the ocean, thousands of miles away.

Again and again the fire replenished, and it burned higher and higher, but still he slept on. A lot of men or more of Indians were coming and going before the camp-fire; they occasionally crouched together, but they remained unmindful of the near proximity of one of the very men for whom they were searching.

Occasionally the tremolo-like whistle was heard in the stillness of the night, and the replies came from different parts of the wood, but where or whether the vented Blackfeet passed, they failed to discover their victims.

But this state of things could not continue for any length of time. One of the keen Blackfeet left the camp-fire and wandered off in the very direction where Mackintosh was lying, halting about a dozen yards away, where he stood like one uncertain in what direction he should turn his steps.

At this juncture, the sleeper moved unasily in his slumber, throwing his arm from off his face. Slight as was the noise, it caught the ear of the red-skin, who started and glanced furtively in the direction, as if he suspected danger.

In the gloom of the wood he discerned nothing, but he carefully withdrew further into the darkness, where he was better protected himself, and then began circling around the point whence issued the suspicious sound.

Again the arm of the sleeper struck the dry leaves, and the Blackfoot was able to tell precisely where the noise occurred.

Something certainly was there that needed investigation, and he crouched down like a panther and began circling around it.

Step by step he drew near, until at length he was enabled to detect the figure of a man stretched out upon the ground.

"What could it mean?" the Indian instinctively asked himself, pausing and gazing at the form, doubtful whether it was that of a dead or dying man.

As the savage was now situated, the latter was between him and the fire, so that he could see any movement made by the stranger, and while he was looking at him, he saw a foot stir.

This proved at once that the man was alive, and the indifferent way in which he stirred it, proved at once that he was not wounded.

The Indian had already discovered that he was a white man, and consequently one of the very party for whom they were searching, and he comprehended at once that he must be asleep.

What a fortunate thing for the Blackfoot!

His heart gave a leap of exultation at the thought. While the other dozen or more were searching here, there, everywhere for the whites, here was one directly in his power.

It was very easy to summon his comrades around him, to secure the poor fellow at once, but why do that?

Was he not abundantly able to take care of him? Ay, though he were aroused and fully armed, the Blackfoot would have sprung forward, eager to meet him in the hand-to-hand encounter.

So, drawing his knife, he crept on toward him. He was determined that the glory of his scalp should belong to him alone. He would carry it into camp and glory over it, in the face of the other braves.

Only a few feet separated them, and the knife was in the hand of the Indian, who was now certain of his prey.

And still Ned Mackintosh slumbered!

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT NEXT?

"ANOTHER condemned difficulty," muttered Nick Whiffles, as, after thoroughly reconnoitering the camp, and crawling two-thirds of the way around it, he failed to discover any sign of Ned Mackintosh; "either me or him has got off the track. I'm sure it ain't me."

Still not suspecting that any thing serious had occurred, Nick waited where he was expecting that his young friend would speedily put in an appearance.

"There ailers seems to be some difficulty," a man's gettin' into," he continued, talking partly to himself and partly to Calamity, who was crouched down beside him. "The very first time I come across that younker, he was in the greatest difficulty of his life, for when a baby two or three years old starts out in a canoe, he needn't calculate on having a very easy time of it. I s'pose I had a good deal of the same difficulty when I was young; for I've heard my mother say I had all the diseases even heard of, and some new ones that was never heard of. I was so short when I got the fever that it hadn't room to turn in me. The doctor that tended me was a fit doctor, and he didn't know nothin' 'bout any thing else; so he allers made it a pint that I should be scared into fits afore he'd have any thing to do with me, 'cause he said he was death on fits, and it was necessary I should go into 'em afore his medicines would do me any good."

"But I paid the old scamp off by giving him the whooping-cough, and it took such a hold of him that he coughed for six days without stopping, and then had a screw put on the top of his head to keep it on, but the thread didn't hold and that was the end of his career as a fit doctor."

"Howsumever I got well myself, and a few days arter fell out the third story window, but I struck on the head of a colored gentleman that was passing. He had a new hat on, and it jammed it down over his eyes, so there was another difficulty, es my old fit gentleman had to pay for that."

"Then the first time I went out swimmin', I got caught in the current, went through the gates, and got under the wheel, so I was purty hot in them days, and instead of gettin' mashed, I only got purty well-squeezed; but it stopped the water-wheel, and took 'em a half-hour to get me out, and my father had to pay the men for the half-hour lost time."

"When I went to school, the teacher said I had an amazin' talent, but it was a talent for making fires—and that's what he set me at; but the second time I undertook it, the stove upset and set fire and burned down the building. Nobody ever found it out, howsumever, as no one besides me seed it for

except the teacher, and he got burned up before he could get out.

"So I got out of that difficulty very handsomely, but only to tumble into another, for when I was in St. Louis, some thief in the crowd finding himself hard chased, took the money out of the pocket-book and slipped the pocket-book in my pocket, and then grabbed me by the collar, and yelled, stop thief."

"That and some other things disgusted me with the settlements, and I struck out for the prairies and mountains."

"I was young in them days, and I hadn't been out here long before I fell in love with a beautiful squaw, and spent a year in courtin' her from a distance, and then when I got a chance to come nearer, I see'd she was a big warrior that slammed her tomahawk at my head, and that I had to sputter by lettin' daylight through his skull."

"Every man must have his difficulties, I s'pose. Here is Ned come all the way across the ocean to get the gal he loves and loves him, all 'cause there was a difficulty that wouldn't let 'em take her away with the rest of the family, and now when he comes all the way arter her, here's the condemned difficulty of all; we've got the critter, but here the varmints are all about us, and there's no tellin' when we're goin' to git her clear away."

"I send Ned out to make a racky-noisance and he agrees to meet me, and he don't do it—some little condemned difficulty is in the way; he's run outside of me, which, however, is better than runnin' inside, and we've got to crawl around here in the dark for a good while afore we run afoul of each other."

"That's allers some difficulty fur a man to stumble over, or to stop him, but I s'pose if there wasn't he'd get to runnin' so fast that there'd be no stoppin' to him."

"It was very evident from Nick's manner that he was not alarmed at the absence of his friend. He supposed that it had all resulted very naturally, and that they would soon find each other."

Nick was quite sleepy, too, but he was also much accustomed to self-denial and privation that he easily staved off his creeping drowsiness. He was so far away from the fire that none of its light could possibly strike him, although he could plainly see the moving figures near it.

Calamity still crouched at his side, and the trapper affectionately laid his arm over his neck, as a lover would have done.

"I order to be kicked to be talkin' 'bout difficulties, when God has been so clever to me, and what am I here to do but to be a blamed sight kinder to him than he deserves? All through my difficulties He has took care of me; I'm healthy (specially at feedin'-time), and the pup here still sticks by me."

"Then there's Shagbark at home—one of the smartest animals that ever kicked a varmint over. Shagbark hasn't had much of a hand in gettin' the gal out of the power of the varmints, 'cause we've had to use our canoes; but he's home gettin' fat, and will be ready to take the next trail with me. Me and Shagbark have seen some hard times together, and I've found his heels a purty handy thing when the reds kin down on us rather too heavy."

The fact of it was that, although Nick Whiffles was disposed to talk very much of his "difficulties," he did not intend to do so in a complaining sense, but rather, for his own amusement. He could not help feeling that he was under the greatest obligations to the Providence that had brought him through so many dangers to see his advanced age.

About this time Nick began to feel so much apprehension regarding his friend that he turned back and resumed his search.

"It may be that he's finished his racky-noisance, and has gone back to court that gal," he mused, believing such a thing possible, but hardly probable.

So he went over most of the ground that he had already trod over, taking a sort of zigzag course, but still without accomplishing any thing toward finding his man.

So much time had now passed that he began to feel serious alarm, and finally he made the last resort.

"Calamity, I'm a little onesy 'bout the lad; do you go and hunt him for me."

The dog at once trotted off in the darkness, fully sensible of the duty that was required of him.

Back and forth and around he went, until finally he struck the scent, and he followed it as he were a bloodhound.

The Indian that was stealing upon the sleeping figure of Ned Mackintosh had already drawn his knife, and had decided where to drive it home, when a slight rustling behind him caused him to turn his head.

As he did so, a huge dark body, like a cannon-ball, on the ricochet, struck him with such violence as to throw him over and over, while the fangs of Calamity were fixed with such unmovable fierceness in his throat that the red-skin, after a few spasmodic struggles, stretched out dead.

It was all done with inconceivable quickness. The almost human foresight of the dog seemed to tell him that his human enemy would bury the gleaming knife in his body if only the opportunity was given, and so he crushed the life out of him at once and completely.

There was no outcry, but the flinging of the leaves so close to the head of Mackintosh aroused him, and he rose to the sitting position just as Calamity released his iron jaws from the throat of the Indian.

One glance and the young man understood all. He saw that the dog had rescued him from death—a fate incurred by his own recklessness—and he impulsively threw his arms about the animal.

"God be thanked for sending you in time!" he exclaimed; "but for you I would not have been a living man this minute."

How came Calamity to be upon the spot at this opportune time?

A moment's reflection served to explain it to him. He had doubtless been sleeping on the ground for a long time, until the wearied Nick had sent Calamity to search for him.

"I am sorry I forgot myself, and gave the trapper all this anxiety," reflected Mackintosh, as he began cautiously retreating from his dangerous position; "but at the same time I am very glad I have been able to secure a good hour or two of slumber, for I needed it bad enough, and might have taken it at a time when it would have put the rest in more danger."

As he had no idea of the proper course to take to reach Nick Whiffles, he put himself under the guidance of Calamity, who, as a matter of course, speedily brought the two men together. Ned confessed to his falling asleep, and explained how the dog had dis-

covered him just in time to save his life from the ferocious Blackfoot.

"The pup done the same thing for me once," replied Nick, who took it all as a matter of course; "it's just like him, just like him."

"What are you going to do when he dies?" asked Ned, looking admiringly at the brute. "I shouldn't consider myself safe a day, leading your life without him."

"I got him at the Selkirk settlement eight years ago, and I think he's good for several seasons yet; he's got plenty relatives there, and I'll hunt 'em out when he keels over, and take some of his nephews or descendants."

"You will keep him till he pegs out with old age?"

"Unless he goes under afore; I expect, howsoever, that Calamity will be my dog when I git to heaven, for you can't make me believe that sick dogs hain't got souls like the rest of us."

Mackintosh had no wish to disturb the pleasant belief of the trapper, and so he let his assent pass undisputed.

"How long do you suppose I have been sleeping?" he inquired.

"Well on to two hours; that is, if you dropped asleep purty soon after you left here."

"That I did, and it has done me good; I sorely needed it."

"What did you 'bout the Indians?"

"Well, not much of any thing, except that there are about a dozen hanging around the camp-fire—for what purpose I am not imagine; and therefore can not tell whether the indications are favorable or not."

"The sign is rather good," added Nick; "this is a sort of a camp, and ain't any trap set to catch us; we can pass around it without runnin' ag'in a lot of the varmints at every step."

"Have you met with no adventure while I was sleeping?"

"None."

"You consider our chances pretty good for getting out the valley now?"

"Better than they were; you see, the varmints are off the track altogether, and don't know where to look for us."

"One of the signal-fires that we saw, you recollect, was on top of the very ridge over which we are to pass; consequently we may look for our enemies there."

"We may look for 'em everywhere," replied Nick; "that Red Bear isn't goin' to give up the chase so long as there's a show for 'em."

"I suppose Miona is looking for us."

"Yes, and time is precious; so we'll walk and talk."

The two men were so far away from the camp that they considered it safe to engage in a cautious conversation without risk of being overheard by their enemies. At the same time neither was so reckless as to forget that there was danger all around, and that a misstep even might betray them.

Nick Whiffles was quite hopeful again. He and the others had been so hotly pursued, and were driven to the wall, as it were so often, that there was a relief in the respite which they now enjoyed.

Circling around so as to give the camp of the Blackfeet a wide berth, they rapidly approached the spot where they had left Miona.

They walked along some time in silence, and then Ned looked about him, and said: "I can't see very well, but this looks like the spot."

"It is the spot."

"But where is Miona?"

"That is what I should like to know. She isn't here, that's certain."

The two walked carefully about for a few minutes, and then Ned asked his companion:

"Are you really certain this is the place where she was to await our return? I didn't notice it particularly enough to tell."

"It's the spot, sartin; there's no mistake about it."

"Merciful heavens! then she is gone!"

"It looks very much that way," was the answer of Nick Whiffles, who was standing in the shadow of the wood, with his arms folded and resting upon his rifle.

This was his attitude when in deep, perplexing thought, as he certainly was on the present occasion.

Ned Mackintosh waited a few minutes for him to speak, and then growing impatient asked:

"Where can she be, Nick? Do not say she is in the hands of the Blackfeet, or you will drive me wild."

"I don't say where she is," was the impressive reply of the trapper. "I don't know whether she's dead or livin', but I think the varmints have got her, and if they have you may make sartin that you'll never see her again!"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 52.)

Charley's Fortune.

BY ROB RAYMOND.

"Come, Charley, throw that cigar away, and let us have the story. I am dying to hear how the quondam law student, who had neither cross nor crown to bless himself, has been transformed into a modern Cressus."

The speaker, Fred Danley, set his empty wine-glass upon the library table, and leaning back in his easy-chair, twisted his blonde mustache with an affected air, and continued in a theatrical tone:

"It hath been whispered in our horrified ear that our old chum hath been snared in the meshes of matrimony by one of the fairest daughters of Eve! Oh, Charley! where were the vows of eternal hatred against the feminine race that we took together at college?"

Fred suddenly lost his dramatic air as his eye rested on a portrait hung on the wall.

"Is that a picture of your wife, Charley?"

Charley nodded his head.

"Per Jove! Tonantem, as we used to say at college. A handsome wife and an immense fortune at one stroke! Friend Charley, you must have supped with Fortunatus. By the beard of the Prophet if I— But let us have the yarn. Commence at the beginning. You know I have not heard a word from you in four years."

Fred lit a fresh cigar and settled himself in a comfortable position by placing his feet about six inches higher than his head.

Charley Medworth smiled at the eagerness of his volatile friend, and tossing his half-smoked cigar aside, tilted the back of his chair against the wall, and prepared to satisfy Fred's intense curiosity.

"My father," began Charley, "was once the wealthiest banker in the Southern city of M— One day, feeling somewhat in-

disposed, he did not go down-town to the bank. Next morning he was a beggar. While he was absent, his cashier, in whom he had the most implicit confidence, had seized all the money in the bank, borrowed large sums in my father's name, and fled, no one knew whither. The best detectives in the country were immediately placed upon his track, but in vain; not the slightest clue of him was ever found."

"The shock was more than my father's health could bear; in a few weeks he sunk into a premature grave. My mother, broken-hearted by his loss, survived him but a short time."

"My uncle came from the North, settled our affairs, and took my sister Alice and me back with him."

"As we were students together both at school and college, you are not very anxious to know any thing about that period of my existence."

"After we graduated, you went abroad on your foreign tour, from which it seems you have only just returned, and I commenced the study of Blackstone, Chitty & Co. Soon after, the Mexican war broke out. Of course the patriotism of our town was instantly ablaze."

"After listening to a good many long-winded speeches from ambitious stump-orators, we succeeded in raising the most awkward company of cavalry that ever wore the U. S. uniform. With a great flourish of trumpets and penny whistles, your humble servant was invested with the shoulder-straps of captain of these puissant warriors."

"Soon after, the color was rapidly fading out of our new uniforms under the burning sun of Mexico. We saw some hard fighting, and you would not have recognized our regiment after a few months' service. We took part in every battle, and when the city of Mexico was stormed, our regiment was one of the first to enter the city."

"Flushed with victory, we galloped proudly through streets that probably once held the more splendid pageants of the Aztec kings, endeavoring to attract the notice of the dark-eyed, olive-skinned senoritas, little reflecting that we would be gazed upon, not with admiration, but hate."

"As we turned into a magnificent avenue, lined upon each side with trees, my horse—a spirited animal—took fright from some unknown cause, and seizing the bit between his teeth, darted off with the speed of the wind. He carried me nearly to the end of the avenue before I brought him under control."

"Dismounting to adjust the girths, piercing cries, as of a lady in distress, struck on my startled ear."

"I hesitated for a few seconds, uncertain from what quarter they came, until a repetition of the screams from a splendid mansion near by decided me. Hastily throwing the bridle-rein over a post, I ran to the house, and bounding up the steps, burst open the front-door, to find myself in a long, narrow passage-way. At the other end was an open door, leading into a beautiful garden."

"Again the screams reached my ears, this time I thought from the garden. In a moment I was breathing an air loaded with sweetness from the magnificent flora of a tropic clime. One hurried glance around, and a sight met my eye that caused every nerve in my frame to tingle with indignation."

"A dark-browed, savage-looking Mexican officer was endeavoring to force a gag into the mouth of a young and lovely girl—yes, that's she," nodded Charley, as Fred glanced at the portrait on the wall—while an old gentleman, evidently her father, was engaged in a desperate but unequal struggle with a gigantic ruffian in the costume of a guerrilla."

"Drawing my sword, I bounded to the assistance of the lady. Though we were equally matched, yet I had no opportunity to test the keenness of my weapon, for the moment the Mexican caught sight of me, doubtless thinking a whole regiment was at my heels, he gave a frightened yell of *Los Americanos*, and, sealing the garden wall, disappeared."

"The old gentleman wiped the blood from his face, and shook me warmly by the hand. Then the lady placed her hand in mine, and both overwhelmed me with thanks."

"The gentleman introduced himself as Don Carlos de Garcia, and the young lady as his daughter, Isabella. Both spoke, to my surprise, in the purest English."

"There was an air of refinement about them that commanded my respect, and I made my most profound bow as I announced my name and rank."

"Medworth," repeated Don Carlos, with a violent start, "Medworth! and he eagerly scanned my features. 'Was your father's name James?'"

"Yes, sir," I answered, much surprised.

"Did you? I started in alarm; the Don had turned deadly pale, and I feared he was about to faint."

He controlled himself, however, in time, and, grasping the trunk of a gigantic lily to steady himself, gasped out:

"Was he a banker—of M—?"

"Though astonished beyond measure, I promptly replied: 'He was, sir; were you?'"

"Oh, God!" interrupted Don Carlos, as he threw his clenched hand to his forehead, and staggered back against the wall."

"I sprung to his assistance, but he recovered himself by a powerful effort, and, waving me back with his hand, in a broken voice assured me it was nothing but a fainting-fit, he would soon be over it."

"Let us go to the house," he added; "we ought—"

The words were drowned in the report of a rifle, a bullet whizzed past my ear and buried itself in the bosom of Don Carlos! The warm blood burst in streams from the wound; he passed his hand to his breast and sunk, fainting, to the ground."

"With a heartrending scream, Isabella threw herself beside him and vainly endeavored to stop the rapid flow of blood."

"As for me, though I turned at the report of the rifle, yet I had barely time to unsheath my sword before the Mexican officer, who had left in such undignified haste a short time before, sprung from behind a tree, sword in hand, and aimed a savage cut at my head."

"As I turned to parry his stroke, I caught a glimpse of at least a score of guerrillas leaping over the low wall. My heart sunk at the thought that I should never see home or friends again, for those were fearful odds, but my adversary gave me little time for reflection."

"Carajo," he swore, as he lunged with all his strength at my unprotected throat. "Die! dog of an American."

"I easily parried his wild thrust, and before he could recover his guard, my sword passed through his heart."

"A fierce joy thrilled my frame as he threw his arms wildly in the air and fell at my feet a corpse!"

"In an instant, I was engaged in a fearful struggle with the infuriated banditti. In less time than I take to tell it, I received a dozen wounds from their clubbed rifles; my eyes were filled with blood, and in a moment more I would have been a lifeless mass, when the heavy tread of armed men shook the air, and, in a second, the garden was filled with blue-coats."

"The guerrillas fled like frightened sheep; many of the soldiers followed in hot pursuit. It seems that my company had followed me as fast as possible, and had just arrived opposite the house when they were startled by the rifle report. Noticing my horse standing near by, they feared I was in danger, and, searching for me, found the front-door open, and luckily arrived in the nick of time. Not one of the guerrillas escaped. Those who were not killed in the heat of the chase, were captured and hung."

"As soon as all fear of danger was over, the house-servants emerged from—Heaven only knows what hiding-places—and set up an infernal pean of grief at the sight of their bleeding master, and apparently lifeless young mistress. A middle-aged woman, whom I judged to be the housekeeper, because she wore both an air of authority and a bunch of keys, gave a dozen different orders at once, ending by telling four of the male servants to bear Don Carlos to his chamber, and requesting me to send for a physician. I immediately dispatched a soldier for our regimental surgeon, with strict orders to use all possible speed."

"Isabella had revived, by this time, and, leaning on my arm, entered the house and passed into the room where Don Carlos lay. At the sight of his pale, upturned face, she burst into a violent fit of sobbing, and threw herself beside the bed."

"Though somewhat hardened to dying scenes by daily association, yet the sight of that lovely girl weeping by her father's side, totally unmanned me; a lump rose in my throat, and I had to turn aside to conceal the tears that came to my eyes."

"Luckily the arrival of our surgeon at that moment saved me from prying eyes. The servants and soldiers were banished from the room, and I conducted the doctor to the bedside of Don Carlos."

"He made a careful examination, and pronounced him mortally wounded, with but a few hours to live."

"It was pitiful to see how often the ingenious countenance of Isabella changed expression while the surgeon was at work—one moment illuminated by hope, the next, shadowed by fear. Don Carlos received the news with Christian resignation, simply saying, 'God's will be done.' Turning to his housekeeper, he requested her to send for his lawyer."

"A long silence followed, during which the dying man breathed with great difficulty. At length he turned to me."

"Captain Medworth," said he, faintly, "will you be kind enough to remain until my dissolution?"

"Certainly, Don Carlos," I replied, "my poor services are at your disposal."

"Thanks," he murmured.

"Oh! there is Antonio," he exclaimed, as a gentleman, dressed in a professional suit of black, entered the room.

"Captain, you will excuse me if I ask you to withdraw for a short time. Stay, doctor," he added, as the surgeon rose to follow me, "I have a favor to ask of you. Isabella, my dear, you will retire with Captain Medworth. Nay, do not weep, said he, as her tears rained upon the bed; 'I am going to a better world, my child!'"

"We waited in the adjoining parlor for a length of time that seemed an age to Isabella and myself."

"At length, a summons arrived for Isabella, and soon afterward I was called to the room. As I entered, the unnatural stillness of the place sent a thrill of undefinable fear through my nerves. As I closed the door, both the housekeeper and the doctor looked up."

"The strange, startled expression upon their faces, again sent the cold chills of fear through me, and my blood seemed to turn to ice."

"Don Carlos lay with his face turned toward the door. The moment I entered his sunken eyes gleamed with strange fire."

"Charles Medworth," said he, in a voice so clear and steady that I started with surprise, "Charles Medworth, behold the wretch who sent your honored father into an early grave! You are horrified? Think not that the approach of the Dark Angel has crazed my brain. Alas! Too often have I wished that death would end my sufferings, to be frightened at the approach of the specter now! For nineteen long years here on earth I have suffered the torments of the damned! The Lord delay his vengeance, until He could strike to the earth the murderer of the father at the feet of the orphaned son! Hal!

I see your countenance glowing with compassion for what you doubtless deem the ravings of a mind near death. I tell you, he exclaimed, with startling energy, and he raised himself to a sitting posture by a superhuman effort, 'I tell you that the dying wretch before you once bore the name of Luis Orillo!'"

"For an instant the room grew dark, and a roar as of a mighty cataract thundered in my ear."

"Great Heavens! The name of my father's dishonest cashier! The sound of his voice recalled my scattered senses."

"Captain, will you—can you forgive me? I have suffered deeply for the one false move I made in a moment of madness?" He extended his hand entreatingly.

"I grasped it with emotion too deep for utterance."

"Thanks," he murmured, "I am glad to have a chance to make restitution, even at the eleventh hour. For many years I have searched for you. Secretly, I have offered immense rewards, but all my efforts were in vain. When my will is opened you will find—"

"He sunk back exhausted. The doctor again placed his fingers upon the pulse of Don Carlos, as I shall continue to call him, shook his head dubiously, and stepped back."

"Don Carlos opened his eyes and glanced slowly around the group."

"Good-by," he murmured; "his me, Isabella; I go to meet your sainted mother. His eyes closed, 'God—have—mercy,' came faintly through the parted lips—and he was dead."

"His funeral took place a few days afterward. It was a magnificent affair, conducted with that somber grandeur for which the Spaniards are famous."

"When the will was read, I found myself in possession of a large fortune, fully equal

to that which my father had lost; principal and interest included.

"One thing, however, puzzled me greatly. The remorse exhibited by Don Carlos on his death-bed, and the delicacy of feeling he displayed in restoring my father's lost wealth, convinced me that some more powerful motive than mere greed of gold, must have forced such a sensitive nature to crime. I mentioned my suspicions to Isabella, and obtained permission to examine his papers. I was correct in my conjecture."

"It was the same old story of reciprocated love and parental opposition. At the time he was cashier in my father's bank, he fell madly in love with the beautiful daughter of a Mexican planter, then on a visit to some friends in M—. Don Carlos was a very handsome man in his youth, and it is not strange that in a short time his affection was ardently returned. Her aristocratic parents, however, had far different views for their only child, and sternly forbade her to see Don Carlos any more, and prepare to marry the suitor of their choice, a rich old Mexican Hidalgo, who had nothing but his gold to recommend him."

"As the day rapidly approached, which was to see the idol of his heart united to her hated suitor, Don Carlos grew desperate, and, seizing all the money he found within his reach, appeared boldly before the parents of Isabella, (it was her name too), informed them he had been left an immense fortune by an uncle lately deceased, and in proof exhibited the sum in his possession."

"The sight of his suddenly-acquired wealth and the tears of Isabella, combined with her protestations that she would die before she would wed any one else, overcame the opposition of her parents."

"Shortly after they were united, they departed for Mexico—he assuming the name of Garcia, in accordance, as he said, with the conditions of his uncle's will. But one short year of wedded bliss followed; and then the pure spirit of Isabella died to a better world."

"She left one pledge of her affection to her broken-hearted husband, a daughter who inherited her mother's name and beauty. I learned from his papers that he had made various efforts to restore his ill-gotten wealth to its rightful owners, but he could never learn what had become of the heirs of his employer. At length, finding all his efforts useless, he placed it at interest, where it remained until he returned it to me."

"Well, but little more remains to be told."

As the war was over, I returned home, resumed my law studies, graduated with flying colors and hung out my shingle. I'll take you to see my office this afternoon, and but there goes the dinner-bell; let us go down."

"But, Charley," said Fred, as they descended the stairs, "what has become of Isabella? Surely you—"

Fred suddenly closed his lips as a lady, whom he had no difficulty in recognizing as the original of the portrait in the library, swept gracefully out of the dining-room, and stopped abruptly at the unexpected sight of a stranger.

"Mrs. Medworth," said Charley, stepping forward; "my old college chum, Mr. Danley."

As Fred raised his eyes after making his best bow, his heart took an unwonted bound, for a young lady of extraordinary beauty just joined the group.

There was a laughing devil in Charley's eye as he said: "Alice, allow me to introduce an old friend, Mr. Danley. My sister Alice, Fred," and added to his sister, "he is a confirmed old bachelor, Alice. No use in trying to capture him."

Fred mentally called down a very doubtful sort of blessing upon the head of his friend for that remark, as they passed into the dining-room.

During the progress of the dinner, Fred exerted himself to remove any false impression that Charley's laughing remark might have made on the mind of his sister.

He must have succeeded, for it was only a few months afterward that we heard the wedding-bells ringing joyfully at their union.

BASE BALL.

THE PROFESSIONAL NINES OF 1871.

The following are the players in the professional nines already complete, given in the order from catcher to right fielder:

MUTUAL.—C. Mills, Walters, Start, Ferguson, Smith, Pearce, Hatfield, Egger and Patterson.

ATHLETIC.—Malone, McBride, Fisher, Regan, Meyerle, Radcliffe, Outburt, Sensender and Huebels.

CHICAGO.—M. King, Zettler, McAtee, Wood, Pinkham, Duffly, Tracy, Simmons and Atwater.

HAYMAKERS.—McGeary, McMullen, Pike, Bevens, Bellan, Graver, S. King, York and Flynn.

OLYMPIC.—Allison, Brainerd, E. Mills, Sweeney, Waterman, Force, Leonard, Berthrong and Glenn.

BOSTON.—McVey, Spaulding, Gould, George Wright, Schaffer, Barnes, Birdsall, Harry Wright and Cone.

The Eckfords will raise a field to support Martin, which will include Hodes, Andrew Allison, Nelson, Swandell, the two Snyders, etc. The Athletics are as yet in want of six players, Chapman, Hall and McDonald being the only ones left of last year's nine.

The Forest City of Cleveland, having lost Hubbell, are short one man. They have James White, Pratt, Carlton, Kimball, Sutton, Bass, Allison and E. White. The Kingtons, of Fort Wayne, have Lennon, Matthews, Forker, Sellman, Carey and W. Kelly.

The principal professional clubs will play on the following ball grounds: Mutuals and Eckfords on the Union Grounds, Brooklyn; Athletics on the Capitoline Grounds, Brooklyn; Boston Club on the Union Base Ball Park, near Medford;

MY "BUTTON-HOLE FLOWER."

BY FRED FAIRBANKS.

Her eyes are bright as a star of night,
Her laugh is gay as the morning;
Her brow is fair as snow in the air—
A jewel without adorning.
Her cheeks are red as a rose in its bed,
When the breezes of summer are blowing;
Her voice has a ring like a rippling spring
Through a channel of silver flowing.
Her hair is brown, and it rambles down
In graceful curls and tresses,—
In a chestnut flow on her throat of snow
It twines in pretty caresses.
Her lips are sweet as the leaves that meet
In the rosebud's bursting gladness;
Though they sometimes bear a thought of care,
And a distant shade of sadness.
My soul is entranced by the light of her glance,
And her kiss so warm and luscious—
Oh, she is my bride—my beauty, my pride—
My heart's own—only precious,
I never forget to love my pet
I think of her every hour;
And I wait for the time when forever mine,
I shall wear my "Button-Hole Flower."

Strange Stories.

THE BANSHEE.

AN IRISH LEGEND.

BY AGILE PENNE.

The dashing waves beat in with a dull and sullen roar on the frowning rocks that guarded the entrance to Ballycastle bay.

The lead-colored clouds looked down loweringly upon the rugged rocks of Downpatrick Head.

No sun that day had lighted up the waters of the bay, or played upon the beetling crags of the Head.

Night was advancing and a solemn gloom hung over sea and land.

The lights that flashed from the towers of Ballycastle upon the dark waters of the bay gave sign of jewelry and mirth.

After a bloody war, Peace had once more spread her white wings over poor old Ireland.

The battle of the Boyne water had been fought, and James Stuart, defeated, had fled to France, leaving William of Orange to enjoy the English throne.

Roderick O'Connor, the young owner of Ballycastle, had proved false to all the old-time fealty of his race, and had espoused the cause of the stranger against the Stuart.

And now, while ruin and rapine stalked with giant strides throughout Ireland, the owner of Ballycastle, thanks to his adherence to the Orange cause, was high in favor with the English king.

As the gloom of the night came on, the rain-drops commenced to fall.

In the midst of the pelting storm a horseman, wrapped in a heavy cloak and booted to the thighs, rode up to Ballycastle.

Terrence, the porter, had seen the approach of the stranger and appeared in the doorway.

"How far is it to Kilalla, friend?" asked the horseman, in a deep, sonorous voice.

"Kilalla, is it? It's wrong yees are, intirely," replied Terrence. "Faix, yees should have turned off at the cross-roads, twinty miles below."

"Wrong road, eh?" questioned the stranger; "that is bad. The storm promises to be a bad one."

"Sure, you'll not ride to Kilalla in this rain? 'Light, sur, and stay wid us de night. Sorra a stranger was ever turned from Ballycastle if he wanted shelter."

"But, I'm only a poor drover, not fit to mix with grand folks," said the stranger, slowly.

"Then it's welkin ye'll be to take a bite and a sup wid us in de kitchen. The master's married to-night, and there'll be lashin' of things to ate and drink," said Terrence, kindly.

"I'll not refuse your offer."

And the stranger sprang lightly from the saddle. The horse was taken to the stable and the man conducted to the spacious kitchen, where quite a little crowd of the castle domestics and their friends clustered around the huge fireplace.

"God save all here," said the stranger, in greeting, as he took the offered seat and threw off his wet cloak, displaying a common suit beneath, such as a drover would wear, although he had a light sword belted to his side.

The storm howled without, and the little group drew still closer to the roaring fire.

Above the howl of the storm came a low, wailing sound like a woman crying in mortal agony.

"Some one is without in the storm," said the stranger, rising, as if to go to the door.

"Sit down, man!" cried Terrence, in terror; "it's de Banshee that ye hear, keenin' in de storm."

"The Banshee?" said the stranger, in astonishment.

"Yis, there'll be a death in the house afore the morning," moaned Terrence.

The stranger knew the legend of the Banshee well. The appearance of the weeping woman, wailing in the night, boded death.

"An' on the marriage-night, too; oh, wurra! I wouldn't stand in the master's shoes for all the gold in the world," said one of the women, mysteriously.

"What has he to do with the Banshee?" the stranger asked.

"Shure, it's the spirit of poor Allen, the young colleen, that loved the master," said the woman.

"Her spirit?" exclaimed the horseman.

"Maybe you'd like to hear the story," said English Tom, the groom.

"Yes, I confess I would," the stranger replied.

"You see, sir, about two years ago, a brother and sister by the name of Kendrick and Allen Dermot, lived about five miles from here on the road to Kilalla. The master here, Roderick O'Connor and Kendrick Dermot, had been school-fellows. The master fell in love with Miss Allen, who was as pretty a girl, with her coal-black hair and eyes and rosy cheeks, as you'd see in a day's ride. Then the war came on: Master Roderick took up arms for King William, while Dermot enlisted in Sarsfield's brigade and fought for King James. The colleen disappeared and no one knew where she had gone to. The war went on. The battle of the Boyne water was fought. Young Dermot was killed in that fight. When the war ended, the master came home, and Allen Dermot suddenly appeared again in her little cottage. Every one noticed that she looked pale and sickly. The master visited her very often. One night she was taken deathly sick. She sent for the priest. Then the truth came out. She had been secretly married to the master in Dublin, just before the war, but when she came back and

wanted the master to acknowledge her openly as his wife, he told her that the marriage was a false one. It broke her heart and she died. It was not alone the news of the deception that he had practiced upon her that killed her, but he also told her that he was going to marry Miss O'Neal. She never held up her head after that, and with her dying breath she called down Heaven's curse upon him for the wrong that he had done her."

The little group gathered closer together as they listened to the story of the wrong done by "the master," and fearful looks were cast over their shoulders, as though they expected to see the dreaded Banshee, the spirit of the wronged Allen, glowering in through the window upon them.

"And who is this Miss O'Neal that the master is to marry?" asked the stranger.

"The daughter of Redmond O'Neal, of Tubberboun, the richest heiress in Connaught," answered the groom, English Tom.

And then as if inspired by the legend of the Banshee, wild stories were told by different members of the little group that hugged the fireplace so closely.

The bridegroom, Roderick O'Connor, the last of the ancient family that held Ballycastle as their own, was in his chamber, dressing for the ceremony that was to give him as wife the beautiful and wealthy Anne O'Neal.

The huge wax candles that lighted up the room burned with a fitful light.

The curtained windows hid the darkness and the storm from view.

Roderick stood before the full-length glass, tying his lace cravat.

Angry and sullen, he had dismissed his valet. It was his wedding-night, but a deep sense of gloom was on his soul. No joyous smile lit up his handsome face. He seemed more like a man preparing for his execution than for his wedding.

"Curse my hand! how it trembles!" he muttered, as his fingers rudely tore the delicate lace of the neck-tie. "What has got into me to-night, I wonder? My fingers seem to be all thumbs."

Then a sudden gust of rain beat violently against the window, and the wind moaned with a plaintive cry, like one in mortal agony.

With a nervous start and a pale face, Roderick turned toward the window. Naught met his eye but the heavy damask curtain that veiled the darkness of the night.

"Pshaw! what a fool I am," he muttered,

out your window!" and with a rapid motion, Kendrick tore down the curtain that concealed the easement.

O'Connor glanced at the window as though he expected to see the white face of his victim pressed against the glass.

"Take your sword and defend yourself!" cried the brother, drawing as he spoke, and throwing the cloak from his shoulders, exposing his well-knit, powerful form. "I'll give you a chance for your life, murderer though you are."

With the courage of desperation, O'Connor attacked the outlaw.

The shining blades twined around each other like two snakes in close embrace.

The brother was forced back to the window, for O'Connor was the better swordsman of the two.

A thrust out of distance, and Roderick held the life of Kendrick at his mercy. As he raised his hand to deal the death-thrust, his eyes caught sight of a white face pressed against the glass. 'Twas the face of Allen, his victim! The low wail of the Banshee swept into the room.

O'Connor's hesitation cost him his life, for the next moment the steel of the avenger passed through his lungs.

With a groan of anguish, Roderick fell.

An hour after, the guests, impatient, found the bridegroom dead.

On his breast was a paper, on which was written a single line:

"Behold Dermot's vengeance for his sister's wrong!"

Hot chase was given for the outlaw, but the rocky caves of Connaught hid him well.

The Irish legend had proved to be truth.

The appearance of the Banshee boded death.

What Lora's Sin Wrought.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

A WINDY sunset it was, with vivid orange-tinted cloudlets drifting half-anxiously over a parti-leaden sky; and a brisk, chill breeze blowing the long curls over Lora Ellerton's naughty face as she stood by the park gate; she and Romney Glazier.

She was frowning at the sunset, one would have said, to have seen how her eyes were fixed on the vivid cumuli; and her large, fair hands were twisting and untwisting as she stood there.

Mr. Glazier was watching her, as intently

ration from my eyes, much less adoration from my heart."

He was very handsome and very graceful, and Lora thought how superlatively grand he was as he stood before her in all the glory of his manhood, and laying it all—this beauty, this grace, this manliness—at her unworthy feet.

And she loved him so; such natures as hers are like rare pearls, of great price, and to Romney Glazier's keeping she had given her all and in all, fully conscious herself how entirely she was his.

And this proud-mannered, good-looking man, as he felt the warm fragrance of her breath on his cheek, and looked down in the pure, fathomless depths of her eyes, told her the truth of his inmost soul when he swore he never would be other than true.

But, with all his perfections, he was only a man, with a man's yearning for the intimate friendship of a fair, womanly woman; and Lora Ellerton, knowing as well as he that she was the first love of his heart, was fearful, lest, when irrevocably bound to him and they together sought new friends, he might regret his early choice. So, with true unselfishness, preferring his good to her own happiness, this love of Romney Glazier's sent him forth.

And he went—not unwillingly!

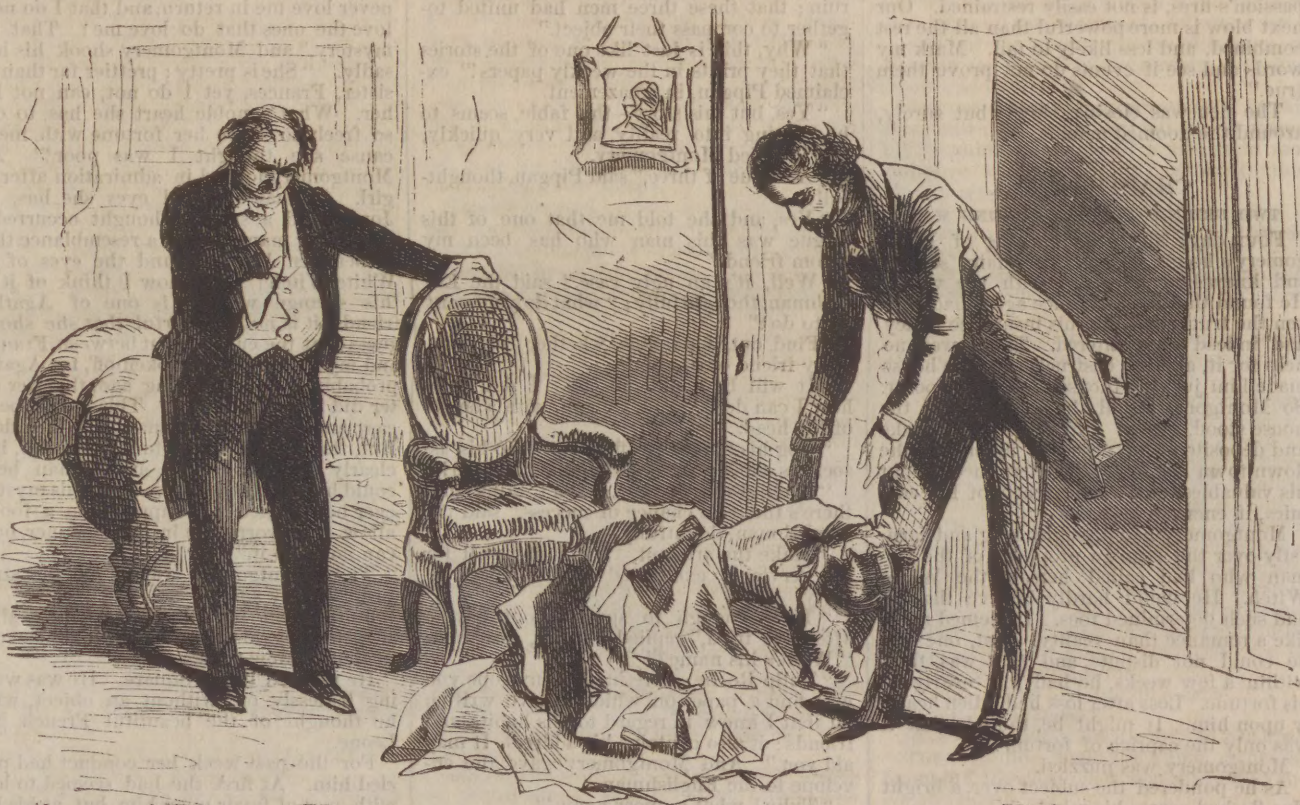
Ten years had not made such a very great difference after all; and Lora Ellerton, looking at the reflection in her dressing-mirror, was quite certain that the Miss Ellerton of thirty-two was the Lora of twenty-two, only a little more dignified, a trifle *embonpoint*, perhaps, certainly very stately in the magnificent ball costume of trailing golden gauze.

More than ever, that night, as she awaited the carriage that was to convey her to the grand ball at the *salon* of the Countess De Voicy, Lora Ellerton realized how lonely a life hers was, without even one friend who loved her, who cared whether she lived or died.

True, there were "summer friends" by the score whom she could count, but, were she to die, any and all of them would only remark at her funeral cortege, as they had done many a time at her horses and *coupe*, "How stylish!"

Hers had been a remarkably eventful life since the night, ten years ago, when she, in the fresh romance of her womanhood, had thought it so good, so unselfish, so noble, to give Romney Glazier a chance to choose between herself and a possible rival.

Well, her nobility had met its reward—



WHAT LORA'S SIN WROUGHT.

with a feeble attempt at a laugh, that even to his own ears sounded ghastly and hollow.

"It is only the rain beating against the casement; and yet, it seemed like some one there tapping for admittance. The howling of the storm, too, sounded like a woman crying in pain. I'm as nervous as a child put to bed in the dark. I'll try some wine and see if it will steady my nerves. Strange that her face comes up in my memory to-night!" and a dark frown spread over his features as he spoke. "In vain I strive to think of blooming Anne, my wife that will be in a few short hours."

Then O'Connor filled a goblet with wine and drained it in a draught.

"The generous liquor fired his blood.

"There, I feel better now," he cried, as he placed the goblet on the table by the side of the glass. "Phantoms of memory, I defy you!"

Then, raising his eyes, he looked into the glass and started with astonishment not unmixed with terror. In the glass he saw reflected the figure of a man, wrapped in a dark cloak, and with a broad-leaved beaver pulled down over his brows, standing in the center of the room, motionless as a statue.

Hardly able to believe the evidence of his senses, Roderick turned from the glass to gaze upon the unknown. His eyes had not deceived him; the glass had reflected truly, for the cloaked man stood before him.

"Who are you, sir, and what do you want here?" demanded O'Connor, in anger, finding that he had to do with flesh and blood and not with a phantom.

"Look in my face," said the stranger, removing his hat and casting it upon the floor; "you will recognize me, although my altered appearance deceives your servants."

"Kendrick Dermot!" gasped Roderick, in horror.

"Ay, the brother of the girl that you so basely betrayed. Oh, contemptible hound that you are! I forgot that you were an enemy to my country, my religion and my king, and gave you the hand of my sister, because she loved you. How did you repay that love? You thought me dead at Boyne water. You betrayed the heart of the girl that trusted you. I know your crime and have come for vengeance. By a miracle I escaped from the bloody troopers of William of Orange. Like a wolf, I have found shelter among the rocks, but I come from my lair on the scent of blood. This is your wedding-night, but your bride will not be the heiress of O'Neal's fortune. No! Grim Death is your bride. Even now the spirit of your victim, the Banshee, is keening with-

as she was watching the graying sundown; every curl of those perfect-cut red lips, every frown that gathered on her forehead, where little light flosses of curls curled, every varying light in her brown, intense eyes was noted by him as he watched and waited for her to speak.

They were both more than ordinarily attractive, in manner, appearance and mind; both were proud, and one was poor—and that was why they were standing there at the park gate in that strange, constrained way.

Until since the sunrise of that blustering March day, neither had known of the sudden fortune that had come to Romney Glazier, as it were from the winds, so like a fairy gift it seemed; and now, the money, true to its nature, true to its character of being the 'root of all evil,' was dividing them, even before the sunset glows had faded down the western slope.

Lora Ellerton drew a long breath, and turned her royal face around so that Romney Glazier could see her still plainer; and the words came that he had been waiting for, expecting yet not wanting to hear.

"My first impression was the true one, Romney. Now that you are rich, you must see more of the world, and more of women, before you take a wife. Not that I want you to give me up, and her sweet, tender voice took, almost unconsciously, a high, sharp tone, and then she laid her hand on his with a rare, proud humbleness, 'because I am convinced there is none other for me but you.'"

He lifted her hand from his palm and kissed the warm fingers before he replied.

"Nor for me, save you, my own Lora. And therefore, why need I go?"

Her luminous eyes lightened for a moment.

"Because I want you to."

And then, when she had spoken, they grew less lightsome again.

"Lora, love, and if I do take this tour for the two years, how will you pass the time while I am gone? You will be constant and true, I know."

"Constant and true!" She repeated the words almost before they had left his lips, and looked half-reproachfully in his eyes.

"You know I will be, Romney," she added, with her serene air of graciousness. "I will bind myself by whatever promises you will; but you, Romney, shall go free; so that if another shall—"

The young man laid his palm over her lips.

"You suggest treason! As if there lives 'another' who can so much as claim admi-

very often in this world of ours come just such pitiful recompenses—and Romney Glazier had found fairer faces and women who charmed him more than Lora Ellerton had done.

At first, the actual realization of his disloyalty had well-nigh crushed the proud heart; then, when the edge of her grief had worn off somewhat, she made up her mind to make herself such a woman as one of those who had succeeded in wooing him away from her.

It was not so very difficult; Lora had been well paid in her position as French instructor at Etherage Hall; five years' saving had amounted to a good many dollars—a thousand or more—that remained uncollected in old Squire Etherage's hands, who, besides paying her interest for it, was so delighted by her economy and prudence that he presented her with a check for a thousand more the day she left his house.

Lora was smart, proud, independent and possessed of remarkable tact; twenty-five hundred dollars was no despicable foundation for a fortune; the fickle fairy favored her; and, when she was thirty-two, Miss Ellerton was an acknowledged belle and heiress in American circles at Paris.

All these years she had been watching Romney Glazier; he was unmarried, and fast wearing of the gilded life he had chosen, while the engagement with the beauty, the rumor of which had come over the water to Lora, was long ago broken.

He and Lora, in all these years, had never personally met; their classes of society were infinitely removed one from the other; Lora, whom duchesses smiled to, and lords admired, was superlatively superior to the circle in which Romney moved.

She had often, unseen, seen him; but, until the night of the *bal masque* given by the Voicy, no opportunity had been presented for their meeting.

But to-night, she mused, twirling the heavy dead-gold bracelets, she would see him *once more*!

Her cheek flushed at the thought; would he repay her for all her weary labor by a reconciliation? or would he meet her as a one-time friend?

Her elegant carriage was announced, and she entered to be conveyed to the scene of decision; what wonder was it that her eyes were flashing and her face glowing when she entered the *salon*?

The aristocratic footman announced her with his loud tone, people near her bowed or smiled, and with a careless, yet withal sweepingly searching glance, Miss Ellerton walked over to her friend, the Countess

Voicy. That one keen glance sufficed to show her that Romney Glazier was not there, as yet.

Then, knowing the fact that she would be there, had he purposely tarried away therefor?

From that moment, Lora Ellerton decided he was forever lost to her; all those long, patient years she had been so fondly dreaming it would "come all right" after all, as such things came in novels.

But now, as the truth forced upon her that this trustful waiting for a recreant was none the less romantic than sending him forth to forget her, she very keenly realized how utterly lonely her future life would be.

True, she had refused several very advantageous offers of marriage; true, there was at present a dignified elderly gentleman who occasionally gave indications of a proposal in the dim distance; but Lora did not care for him—and she had loved Romney Glazier so.

She was dancing the Lanciers with this probable suitor of hers, while she was so busy thinking of all this; then the footman called out "Mr. Romney Glazier and lady."

Lora's heart gave a fearful throb as she looked across the room at them; her Romney, a little aged, and so very elegant; the enchanting girl-woman on his arm, so fairy-like in her alabaster purity of face, her deep dark-blue eyes, that Lora could see, shone but for Romney Glazier.

She sickened with a deathly agony for the second; then came a dull, dying sigh that assured her it must be buried from sight forever. She was looking really ill, and Mr. Limberville escorted her to her carriage, and accompanied her home; when he bade her good-night, he kissed her—for they were betrothed during that ride home.

She had never mentioned Mr. Glazier's name to her suitor, nor had he; she buried the sweet sound away down in her heart, and prepared for her wedding. It was to be a very stylish affair, and all the Americans in Paris were to come.

"My daughter Elise will come to see you, Lora, before our wedding, if you will permit her?"

She had heard before of this beautiful Elise Limberville, and her heart went out in great gushes of love to her. So she told him to bring her.

"And I will not intrude if I come with her—or perhaps you will allow her lover to accompany her? Elise is in love, too, my dear, as well as her father."

So she gave the permission, never dreaming—well, we wonder as we write how she ever lived over that meeting.

It was Romney Glazier who was betrothed to Elise; Romney who would become her son-in-law.

She sprang to meet him when he entered, so stern and pale, for he knew he would meet her; and when in a wild tumult of anguish and remembrance, she sunk on her knees almost at his feet, he stooped with tender hands to raise her, while Mr. Limberville, to whom the story of their past had just been told, stood in pained silence.

It was a pitiful moment; then, Lora rose to her full height; her eyes tearless and starry in their wide beauty.

"Mr. Limberville, I must break the engagement; I am not able to assume the duties I had not known of."

So she went to another room, without so much as a word to either of the two men; and when the next train left the city, Lora Ellerton had gone—to realize how she had wrought sin in not taking a heart when it was hers to take.

The White Witch: OR, THE LEAGUE OF THREE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "HEART OF FIRE," "WOLF DEMON," "SCARLET HAND," "AGE OF SNADES," ETC.

CHAPTER XXII.

MONTGOMERY FEELS THE BLOW.

"While there is life, there's hope!" exclaimed Angus, not in the least dismayed.

Then he hastily pulled on his coat, dragged the sheets from his bed and placed them on his arm.

"Come, I'll show you how to escape!" he said.

Followed by the affrighted servant he went out into the entry.

The smoke was coming up the stairway in dense masses.

Angus could plainly hear the devouring flames crackling and hissing below.

Angus, though almost stifled by the smoke, led the way to the hall bedroom; the two were in the second story. The young man closed the door behind them as they entered the little room. Then he threw up the window and admitted the fresh air. The street was filled with a howling multitude, attracted by the fire.

The window was just over the porch that covered in the front door. The top of the porch was only some ten feet below the level of the window.

Montgomery dragged the bedstead up to the window, fastened one end of one of the sheets to it, and threw the rest of it out the window.

By means of the sheet Montgomery and the servant descended, easily, to the top of the porch.

Then Montgomery tied the second sheet to the first, and thus descended from the porch to the balcony in front of the house.

Montgomery's clear head and cool nerve had saved both himself and his companion.

The two stood in the street and watched the fire.

It had made such headway before the arrival of the engines that the efforts of the firemen were directed solely to saving the adjoining buildings.

As Montgomery stood among the crowd gazing at the burning building and wondering what the next stroke of ill-luck would be, a hand was laid upon his shoulder.

He turned and found himself face to face with the insurance agent who had written his policy.

"I'm sorry for you, Mr. Montgomery," said the agent.

"Yes, my ill-luck is coming all together," replied Montgomery, with a clouded brow.

"Deuced unlucky!" exclaimed the insurance agent, who was a portly little man, full of life and bustle; "by the way, do you know that I've noticed as a remarkable fact in this world, that when a man does have bad luck, it generally comes all together? It's like a wheel running in a rut; it takes a long time to get it out."

"That's very true, Mr. Hindle," Montgomery said, thoughtfully.

"I've always found it so."

"Another strange fact relating to this calamity. I put my policy in my pocket yesterday, intending to come down to your office and speak about a renewal," Montgomery said.

"Pity you didn't—I speak now as a friend, not as an insurance agent," Hindle observed.

"Why, what difference does it make?" Montgomery asked, looking at Mr. Hindle with astonishment written on his face.

The insurance agent returned the look. He was as much astonished at Montgomery's speech as the young man had been at this.

"Well, your loss wouldn't have been quite so heavy," he said, slowly.

"It is not so very bad," replied Montgomery, somewhat puzzled to guess the meaning of the words of the other.

"Not very bad!" exclaimed the agent, opening his eyes in wonder. "Why it will be a total loss!"

"No!"

"Of course not!" exclaimed Angus, wondering at the apparent stupidity of the insurance agent.

"But why not?" Hindle began to think that the loss of the young man had affected his brain.

"You are strangely forgetful, Mr. Hindle. You ought to be able to remember that I am insured for ten thousand," you wrote the policy."

"You, insured for ten thousand?" exclaimed Hindle, getting a little excited.

"Of course," replied Montgomery, unable to understand why his words should produce such an effect upon Hindle.

"You mean you were insured?"

"No, I don't mean any thing of the sort. I mean that I am insured for ten thousand dollars in the company that you represent. It was to the tenth of October, and to-day is only the sixth," Montgomery replied.

"Good heavens! Mr. Montgomery, your insurance expired yesterday. It was out on the fifth instead of the tenth. I made a memorandum. And the agent showed it to the young man written in his notebook. Montgomery read it with a calm smile.

"You have made a mistake, Mr. Hindle; my policy does not expire until the tenth. I am sure of it."

"And I am sure that it expires on the fifth," said the agent, doggedly.

"Now, I can convince you that you are wrong because I've the policy in my pocket. I was going to call upon you yesterday in regard to it and took it from my safe, but for some reason I neglected it."

Then Montgomery took the policy from his pocket, opened it, and by the light of the flames from the burning house, read aloud:

"Tenth of October."

There was just a little bit of triumph in Montgomery's voice. He had been sure that the agent was wrong and that he was right about the date.

"Good heaven bless me!" exclaimed Hindle in great excitement. "I can't be crazy—losing my memory. Allow me to look at it, please."

Then Hindle adjusted his eye-glasses and examined the paper, carefully.

"Good gracious, Mr. Montgomery!" cried the agent in astonishment.

"What's the matter?" asked Angus, astonished at his manner.

"Why this date has been altered!"

"What?"

"Of course! I will take my oath that I never made an *hike* like that in all my life. My *h's* always have a loop at the top, this one is straight up and down."

"The date altered?" said Montgomery, slowly, and his face looked gloomy and sad as he spoke.

"Yes, I knew I could not be mistaken, for I saw the date in looking over the books yesterday."

"Altered?" Montgomery repeated, slowly. His mind was vainly groping in the dark for some clue to this strange mystery.

"Yes; why, look yourself; can't you detect a difference in the writing? The word *tenth* is a clumsy imitation of my hand-writing, but not a good one by any means."

Montgomery examined it carefully. He saw how true the words of the agent were. The date had indeed been altered.

"But, how could this be done?" he asked, in blank dismay.

"Easy enough," replied Hindle; "the fifth has been taken out by acid and the other date written in its place."

"Yes, I have heard of such things," said Montgomery, slowly and mechanically. His thoughts were far away.

"But I can not understand the reason for such a stupid proceeding," said Hindle, in wonder; "it is of no avail, for the alteration can be detected at a single glance."

"Yes, it is plain enough to me now, and yet I did not notice it before," Montgomery replied.

"You had no suspicion that there was any thing wrong about it, that's the reason. You only looked at it carelessly. But, as I said before, this appears to me to be a crime committed without any object."

"Not so to me; I can see the object plain enough," and Montgomery's brows grew dark as he spoke.

"And what is it?" asked Hindle, in wonder.

"To ruin me!"

"Yes," responded Montgomery, hoarsely; "I have foes who are striking at me from the dark, and the blows are not aimed at my breast, but, coward-like, they strike at my back. The date of the policy was altered so that I should not have it renewed. And then, the moment that it expired they set fire to my home. I was warned, but I did not heed the warning, blind fool that I was! But now, I'll fight these treacherous villains!"

The insurance agent looked at Montgomery with wonder visibly expressed in every line of his fat face. He began to think that the young man's misfortunes had turned his brain.

"Secret foes?" he stammered.

"Yes, but I'll hunt them down!" exclaimed the young man, fiercely.

"You think the house was set on fire?"

"Yes."

"Why not have the people arrested that you suspect?"

"My suspicion is not proof," replied Montgomery, moodily.

"Can I aid you in any way?"

"No; I must fight the battle alone. Good-night," and Montgomery left the agent abruptly, and disappeared in the crowd.

Mr. Hindle looked after the young man in astonishment.

"Well, of all the mixed up pieces of business that I have ever had any thing to do with, this is the worst!" he ejaculated. "Secret foes"—blows in the dark—I'm mystified!"

And then the agent turned his attention again to the burning house.

Two men, dressed roughly in dark clothes, their coat-collars pulled up around their necks, and their felt hats pulled down over their foreheads, standing in a dark angle of the adjoining buildings, concealed by the shadows, had overheard all of the conversation that had passed between the insurance agent and Angus Montgomery.

After the agent and Montgomery had separated, the men came slowly from the dark corner and walked down the street.

"Did you hear what Montgomery said?" said the shorter of the two, and by the voice we recognize him as Tulip Roche.

"Yes," replied the other, thoughtfully. Tulip's companion was Lionel O'Connell.

"He guessed that he has secret enemies."

"Yes."

"Why should he guess that he has enemies?"

"He is not a fool. These blows are coming too quick and heavy upon him to be the result of chance alone. Besides, the alteration of the insurance policy, that could only have one meaning."

"We shall have to be on our guard, lest he discover that these blows come from us."

"How can he discover it?" O'Connell asked.

"It is the tool that betrays the master; but we, so far, have used none. We have done our work ourselves. Each blow that we have dealt him has come from our own hands."

"You forget the countess," Tulip said.

"She will never betray Lionel O'Connell," replied the chief of the League, decidedly.

"If we are true to ourselves there is but little danger."

"But this warning that he says he has received?"

"I understand to what he refers," said O'Connell; "a mysterious woman, who called herself the White Witch, has, by some strange accident, hit upon our very scheme. Of course it is by accident alone, for our secret has been kept, I am sure, by all of us. This meeting took place at the masquerade in Newport, on the very night that we formed our league."

"It is a strange coincidence," said Tulip, thoughtfully.

"Yes; her warning and the alteration of the date has opened Montgomery's eyes."

"Perhaps he will escape us even now," suggested Tulip.

"What, escape from the lure of Leone's dark eyes? ah, no! Why, Tulip, he is so infatuated that he would dare a river of fire for her sake! A man of Montgomery's cool, quiet temperament, once enflamed by passion's fires, is not easily restrained. Our next blow is more powerful than all the rest combined, and less likely to fail. Mark my words and see if events do not prove them true."

The net was closing, slowly but surely, around the doomed man.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TWO FRIENDS FOR THE SINKING MAN.

Four days after the burning of Montgomery's house, he had his affairs settled, and knew how he stood with the world. He found that the insurance agent had spoken the truth, and that his insurance policy had indeed been altered. There was no help for it, and the destruction of the house made him just ten thousand dollars poorer. So Montgomery sold the lot whereon the house stood, turned into money his stocks and deposited the proceeds in one of the downtown banks. He determined to put his valuables out of the reach of his enemies, if enemies he had.

Montgomery had thought long and earnestly over the strange prophecy of the woman who had called herself the White Witch. He could hardly believe that he had such determined foes. It seemed more like a romance than reality. Yet, one fact he could not dispute, and that was, that, within a few weeks, he had lost nearly all his fortune. Loss after loss had fallen heavily upon him. It might be, though, that it was only the caprice of fate.

Montgomery was puzzled.

As he pondered the subject over, a bright idea flashed across his mind.

If he had foes, they were fighting him secretly and in the dark; why should not he try the same mode of warfare?

He thought of the shrewd little Englishman who had rescued him from the den in Baxter street. He would be just the man for an ally! He was, apparently, shrewd and keen-witted.

Montgomery determined to seek him, and if possible engage his services. He remembered the address the stranger had given; and so, one fine afternoon, acting on the idea, he found himself in front of the little English ale-house in Houston street, that displayed for its sign a bunch of grapes.

Entering the house, Montgomery inquired for Mr. Pipgan.

A waiter conducted him up-stairs to a little room where sat the Englishman smoking a long pipe.

Pipgan instantly recognized his visitor. He had an excellent memory.

"Sit down, sir; proud to see you," he said, offering a chair.

"You remember me, then?" Montgomery said, seating himself.

"Yes, sir; it ain't often that I forgets a face; leastways, one that I care to remember," replied Pipgan, quickly.

"Of course you remember the circumstances that led to our acquaintance?"

"I hope I ain't putting it too strong when I say, rather!" exclaimed Pipgan.

"I offered you a reward, but you refused to accept any thing."

"And I'm just the same now," interrupted Pipgan. "Why, bless you, I'd 'a' done as much for almost any one. I never saw a man in a tight place in all my life that I didn't feel like helping him out."

"From what I saw of you on the occasion I became impressed with the belief that you are a cool, shrewd fellow."

Pipgan grinned at the compliment.

"Well, I can't say, you know," he said, in a reflective sort of way. "I ain't a block of ice, nor a cucumber, you know; but I think that I take things easy; and, as for being shrewd, I know just about enough to enable me to take care of No. 1."

"You have already done me one service, and now I have come to ask another."

"All right; I'll do it if I can. As you Americans say, 'go ahead!'"

"If you remember, on our previous meeting, I took you to be a detective officer?"

"Yes, of course," and Pipgan indulged in a quiet laugh. "Just to think of a little fellow like me being taken for a detective!" and Pipgan laughed again.

"I judged so by the coolness and courage that you displayed."

"Why, bless you!" cried Pipgan, "it

didn't require any courage for to frighten the 'Mouse'!"

"Eh? did you know the fellow's name?" asked Montgomery, in astonishment.

"Why—that is—yes, I saw him once across the water," said Pipgan, a little confused.

"Ah, I see! you remembered him?"

"Yes, of course," replied the Englishman.

"Well, as I was saying, anybody jumping into the room would have started him. There ain't much pluck in chaps of his kidney."

"Now I require a second service at your hands. I come to you, because, from what little I have seen of your character I judge that you are just the man that I require."

"What is it?" Pipgan asked.

"Before I can explain, I must tell you a little of my history."

Pipgan laid down his pipe and prepared to listen attentively.

"One month ago, at a masquerade ball at Newport—that's the watering place, you know—"

Pipgan nodded; he did know.

"A woman dressed all in white and with her face covered with a white mask, accosted me," continued Montgomery. "She said that she was called the White Witch, and she predicted that, within one month or one year, money, love and friends would all forsake me."

"Yes, of course, 'one month or one year,' that's what they always say," observed Pipgan.

"But, the strangest part of the whole affair is that the prediction is coming true," Montgomery said.

Pipgan looked at his visitor in surprise.

"What?"

"The month has not yet expired—though it is nearly at an end—and I have lost two thirds of my fortune."

"The dickens you have!" cried the Englishman, with a prolonged whistle.

"The woman that I was engaged to be married to, has quarreled with me and the love has gone."

Pipgan elevated his eyebrows in astonishment.

"But the friends?" he asked.

"As yet, I haven't lost any, but the prediction referred particularly to one man, and if all the words of this mysterious woman come as true as those that referred to the money and love, the loss of my friend was the first blow that fell upon me."

"Then you haven't said all that the White Witch said?"

"No; she further told me that there were three men who hated me and desired my ruin; that these three men had united together to compass their object."

"Why, this is just like one of the stories that they print in the weekly papers!" exclaimed Pipgan, in amazement.

"Yes, but this story—this fable, seems to be turning into reality, and very quickly," replied Montgomery.

"A league of three," said Pipgan, thoughtfully.

"Yes, and she told me that one of this league was this man who has been my bosom friend."

"Well, it's an ugly case," said the Englishman, thoughtfully; "what do you want me to do?"

"Find out, if possible, whether this man is my friend or my foe."

"It will be a difficult job. I don't see how I can do it," said Pipgan, with a shake of his head.

"Do his footsteps; find out who his associates are," replied Montgomery, eagerly.

"Well, I'll try; but, I don't think that the Englishman, doubtfully.

"Make the attempt. I will pay well for the service," exclaimed Montgomery, eagerly.

"Time enough to speak about paying after I've tried," replied Pipgan, carelessly.

"What's his name?"

Tulip Roche; here in this envelope you will find a paper on which I have written out all I know in regard to his habits and friends; it also contains his address. It may aid you." And Montgomery gave the envelope to the Englishman.

"Tulip! what a queer name!"

"Yes; it was a whim of his father. When he was born, on his left breast, just over the heart, was a mark shaped like a tulip flower."

"Well, I'll do the best I can," said Pipgan.

"When shall I see you again?"

"Say three days. By that time I shall be able to tell whether I can succeed or not."

"Shall I come to you here?"

"Yes, and if it's convenient, make it just about this time."

"Very well."

And so the interview ended.

Montgomery walked up Broadway, his eyes bent thoughtfully upon the pavement. Despite the action that he had taken, he could not bring himself to believe that Tulip Roche, the man that he had loved like a brother, had turned against him.

"I have acted like a coward in setting a spy on him," he muttered, as he walked on; yet, it is better to prove him innocent than to have these dark thoughts of his guilt haunting my brain."

Then Montgomery, happening to raise his eyes, beheld Agatha Chauncy coming down the street.

The instant she perceived Montgomery she came straight to him with outstretched hand.

"Oh, Mr. Montgomery!" she exclaimed, "I wanted to see you so much!"

The sight of the girl caused a thrill of pain to shoot, rocket-like, through Montgomery's heart. She brought back to his memory the woman that he was striving so hard to forget. True, he now despised Francis Chauncy, yet often when alone, in the silent hours, when memory was busy in his brain, her face would rise before him, and, like the specter in the romance, would not down at his bidding. Then the thought would come, how happy he might have been in her love.

"Indeed?" Montgomery said, vailing with a courtly smile the agony that was in his heart.

"Yes; I've something that I want to say to you," and Agatha seemed strangely embarrassed as she spoke.

"I'm all attention," Montgomery replied, wondering what she had to say.

"I can't tell you here, with all this crowd passing," she said, hurriedly. "Will you walk down the street with me a little way?"

The two were standing on the corner of Amity street.

"Certainly," Montgomery said.

Getting out of crowded Broadway they walked down the side street.

"Mr. Montgomery—excuse the question—but are you and Frances good friends?" she said, abruptly.

"No," Montgomery replied, quietly.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" And as Montgomery looked in Agatha's face he saw that there were tears in her brilliant dark eyes.

"So am I," returned Montgomery, honestly.

"But, isn't there a possibility that you may become friends again?" she asked.

"No," Montgomery replied, quietly, but firmly.

"Oh, don't say that!"

"But it is the truth. Is this the subject that you wished to speak to me about?"

"No—I—"

"Agatha, hesitated and blushed up to her temples. Montgomery looked at her in astonishment.

"What is it, then?"

"Mr. Montgomery, will you be offended if I—I mean if—I—oh! it's so hard to say what I do mean!" and Agatha blushed deeper than before.

"I do not think that you will offend me by any thing that you will say," Montgomery replied.

"Well, then I'll speak—now don't be angry—I heard someone say that you had lost nearly all your fortune, and that—well, I thought that perhaps you might need money, and—"

"Agatha, you're the best-hearted girl in the world!" he exclaimed. "I understand what you mean, and if I really needed it, I'd take the money that you offer me in the same spirit that you tender it—but, thank Heaven! I'm not quite ruined yet."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" and Agatha's eyes danced with joy.

"But, Mr. Montgomery, are you never coming to our house again?"

Montgomery shook his head.

"But why not? both aunt and myself would be glad to see you; please come!"

"Perhaps I will," Montgomery could not withstand the appealing look of Agatha's dark eyes.

"I won't detain you any longer; mind, you've promised to come; good-by." And with happiness beaming in her face she left him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PASSION WE CALL LOVE.

MONTGOMERY watched her retreating form for a few moments in silence. Like her sister Frances, he had guessed the secret hid in the young girl's heart.

"She loves me," he murmured. "I am sure of it; I read the truth in her eyes. Why is it, in all my life, that the girls I love never love me in return, and that I do never love the ones that do love me? That is a mystery," and Montgomery shook his head sadly.

"She is pretty; prettier far than her sister, Frances, yet I do not, can not love her. What a noble heart she has to offer so freely to share her fortune with me because she thought I was poor!" and Montgomery looked in admiration after the girl.

"What splendid eyes she has. By Jove!" and a sudden thought occurred to the young man; "what a resemblance there is between her eyes and the eyes of the White Witch! And now I think of it: if this strange woman is one of Agatha's friends, it is not wonderful that she should guess that the engagement between Frances and myself would be broken off, for Agatha probably discovered, long ago, that her sister did not care for me. This would be an easy and a natural explanation of the riddle. But, the loss of my fortune! Ah, no, it is clearly impossible that any human being could have foreseen that. Will this mystery ever be revealed? I suppose I'm a fool to allow it to worry me in this manner, but I can not help it."

Then Montgomery walked up the street to Broadway again.

Joining the busy life-stream, he walked slowly along, his mind busy with the events of the past few weeks.

He reached Union Square. He was walking thoughtlessly on, without an object, when he thought of the beautiful French girl, Leone.

For the past week her conduct had puzzled him. At first she had seemed to look with eyes of favor upon him, but, at his last visit, he had noticed that she seemed abstracted and full of reserve.

Montgomery resolved to visit Leone.

"I might as well learn my fate at once. I am fortune's fool; perhaps another stroke of disaster is in store for me? Well, I shall get used to this sort of thing if it keeps on much longer," he said, coolly.

Entering the hotel, he sent up his card, and in a few minutes the servant conducted him to the parlor of the "Countess."

Leone rose to receive him, a glad look in her eyes that did not escape Montgomery's notice.

"You are quite well?" he said.

"Oh, yes," she replied, quickly. "Pray be seated."

Seated, Montgomery surveyed the beautiful girl before him with eager eyes. Never before had she looked so lovely.

"I am glad you came," she said, the charming, innocent smile lighting up her face as the sunbeams light up the moon.

"Why so?" Montgomery asked, his heart beating wild with delight.

"Because I am so lonely," she said.

"Lonely?"

"Yes," and Leone sighed as she spoke.

"That is strange."

"No, I am almost friendless in this great city."

"Friendless! you? so—parson me if my tongue speaks the words that are in my heart—so beautiful!"

Leone cast down her eyes and a slight blush crimsoned her cheeks at his ardent tone.

"I have few very acquaintances," she said, as if wishing not to notice the compliment.

"Is it possible?"

"Mr. O'Connell and yourself are the only visitors I have."

"You knew Mr. O'Connell before coming to New York?"

"Yes."

"Is it possible that we two lucky mortals are the only ones that enjoy your society?"

"Yes."

"Do you know that I ought to be very jealous of Mr. O'Connell, or rather that I would be jealous if I had the right to be so?" said Montgomery, earnestly.

"Jealous," murmured the girl, and again she cast down her eyes and the blush mantled her cheeks.

"Yes."

"Why?" and Leone knew what the answer would be when she asked the question.

"Because, Leone, I love you!"

"You love me," she said, slowly, and her eyes sought the floor.

"Yes," and Montgomery rose from his seat, approached the low easy-chair in which Leone sat, and leaned carelessly on the back of it. "I have loved you, Leone, almost from the moment when first we met. I deemed it an infatuation, struggled against it; but, it is more powerful than my will; it conquers me. Leone, I love you, honestly, sincerely, truly. You are not angry with me for loving you?"

"No," murmured the girl, softly.

"Oh, I thank you for that one little word," and Montgomery knelt by her side and looked with his bright, manly eyes into the downcast face of the girl. "You see, I stoop to conquer," he said, merrily.

"Leone, can't you give me one little word—bid me hope?"

"You say you love me, Angus?" Leone said, slowly, with a shy glance into the earnest face of the kneeling lover.

It was the first time that she had ever called him by his Christian name, and the heart of the young man gave a great leap for joy when the sound fell upon his ears.

"Say it, Leone? I will swear it, if you like!" Montgomery exclaimed, impulsively.

"No, there isn't any need of that; I believe you," Leone said, quickly.

"And may I hope?" pleaded the lover.

"But, Angus, have you considered?"

"Considered what?" he asked.

"The shortness of our acquaintance; you have only known me a little while."

"Yet I feel that I am as well acquainted with you as though I had known you from childhood!" he said, quickly. "You are the best and most beautiful of women!"

"Are you quite sure of it?" she asked, shyly.

"One look at your face would convince anyone."

"Of what? that I am pretty or good?"

"Both!"

"I may have a very bad temper," Leone murmured, looking down.

"You do not believe it?"

"No."

"Not even if I say so?"

"Yes, but you do not say so," said Montgomery, quickly.

A charming smile rewarded the lover's faith.

"But, remember that I am almost a stranger to you, how can you tell what my past life has been?"

"I believe you to be a good, pure girl," answered Montgomery, quickly.

"Suppose some one should tell you to the contrary?"

"I would not believe them!" exclaimed Montgomery, firmly.

"But, if they produced proofs?"

For a moment Montgomery was staggered. A cloud gathered on his brow, but a single glance into the beautiful face of Leone and the cloud vanished even as the morning mists fly before the sun.

"Why do you torture me with such questions?" he asked, reproachfully.

"Is it not my duty to tell you the truth?" asked the girl, turning her face away from the gaze of her lover.

"The truth, yes; but what you have hinted at is not the truth. You do not say that it is, do you?"

"And if I say that it is?" murmured Leone, still keeping her face averted from Montgomery's gaze.

"If? Leone, look me in the face, please."

Slowly, Leone turned her face toward her lover.

Montgomery looked up into the beautiful face; saw the great, black eyes shining, full of truth and love, lustrous with emotion. To his mind it was the face of a saint rather than that of a mortal.

Montgomery took her hands in his. She yielded them up without resisting. The soft, white hands, so perfect in their beauty, lay motionless within his broad palms.

"Now," he said, "palm to palm and eye to eye, look me in the face and tell me that you are unworthy of my love, if you can!"

A moment Leone seemed to struggle to reply; the beautiful face became sad; the soft eyes looked pleadingly into his; the muscles of the mouth quivered, and then her head sunk down upon her breast, avoiding Montgomery's gaze.

"You do not speak?" Montgomery exclaimed, softly. "You can not say to me that you are not worthy of my love?"

"You are right," murmured Leone. "I can not." And she raised her head in surprise.

"Yes, Leone, tell me, what you mean."

"It is because—because I can not give you pain!"

"Leone!" exclaimed Montgomery, half in reproach, "it is because it would not be the truth!"

"And you love me! even when I try to dissuade you from loving me?" she murmured.

"Yes; were all the world to tell me that you were false, and your voice alone say the contrary, I would believe you against all the world!"

"Oh, Angus!" she murmured, faintly.

"You love me?" he exclaimed, softly, rising and still clasping her in his hands.

"Yes."

And in an instant she was pillowed on his breast.

Gently, he raised the little head with its wealth of ebony hair. One long, lingering kiss, heart to heart, soul to soul, and Leone—her bosom throbbing wild with joy, weak as a child—clung fondly to Montgomery's breast—his promised wife.

The shades of the evening warned the lovers that the hour of parting had come.

A dozen kisses, each one sweeter than the former, and they parted.

As Montgomery descended the stairs, his brains aching with joy, one of the servants accosted him.

"Dis yer Mr. Montgomery?"

"Yes."

"Letter, sar."

Montgomery took it; the handwriting was a strange one. He opened it and started with surprise. The letter was signed, "THE WHITE WITCH."

A Natural Curiosity.—Virginia has another natural curiosity besides the famous bridge which the father of one of Mark Twain's heroes helped to build. It is in the shape of a girl, four years old, having a mustache and whiskers, the hair upon the forehead reaching to the eyebrows, and a very heavy head of hair, exceedingly black, extending below the shoulders. The child is quite sprightly, with fully developed limbs and a well-formed body. The arms, shoulders and back, if not the whole body, are covered with soft, downy hairs.

A LOVER'S LINES

As the sweet blackberry's modest bloom
Fair-flowering, greets the sight;
Or strawberry, in their rich perfume,
Fragrance and bloom unite.
So this fair plant of tender youth
In outward charms can vie,
And, from within, the soul of truth,
Soft-beaming, fills her eye.

Pulse of my heart! dear source of care,
Still sighs, and love-breathed vows!
Sweeter than when, through scented air,
Gay bloom the apple boughs!
With thee no days can winter seem,
Nor frost nor blast can chill;
Then the soft breeze, the cheering beam,
That keeps it summer still!

Oath-Bound:

THE MASKED BRIDE.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL,
AUTHOR OF "SHADOWED HEART," "SCARLET CRESS,"
"THE MASKED BRIDE," "THE MASKED BRIDE," "THE MASKED BRIDE,"

CHAPTER XI.

PREPARING FOR THE BLOW.

HALF-WAY between The Towers and Edenville, on the same side of the river as the Roscoe estate, and standing a considerable distance from the main road, was the cozy, humble cottage of the Halles, the family of whom a trivial mention has been made in a preceding chapter; the place Undine Del Rose had visited the day of her call upon Crystal Roscoe and Bertrand Haighte.

It was rather a pretty place, with all trees hiding it from view, and a faint glimmer of the river visible from its upper windows; a pleasant home for the small family who lived there.

They were but three in number. The husband, Jacob Hall, who was gardener at Edenville, his wife, whom the housekeeper at Edenville sometimes employed on extra occasions, and Lida, their niece, the child of Mr. Hall's brother, a young woman of twenty, who was Crystal's dressing-maid; who had been in that capacity a long time. She was not a good-looking girl, and had it not been for the faithfulness with which she attended to her duties, she never would have remained at Edenville so long as she had.

Her recommendations, coming as they had, together with her aunt's and uncle's, from a friend of Mrs. Haighte, had been greatly in her favor; and so, in spite of her homely face, with its keen, sullen black eyes, and the heavy, overshadowing hair, that made her ugly, she stayed on, year after year; and her mistress became accustomed to her looks completely.

It was Lida Hall that Undine Del Rose had mentioned to Mrs. St. Havens; Lida, who had years before worked for Mrs. Temple, who had recommended the family to Mrs. Haighte.

In those early days, when Undine visited often at the Temples, when she, and Lida and Clifford had not yet been fettered by the courtesies of a fashion that in later years forbade a son and daughter of wealth and aristocracy, associating with a maid of no name, particularly, had played together in Mrs. Judge Temple's carriage-house, and built houses of kindling wood, glad to escape the fine dresses and costly toys awaiting them in the parlor.

Between Undine and Lida had always existed a friendship, although Clifford had completely forgotten her; and, despite the difference in their position, Undine had several times gone to see her, with no particular reason therefor until the last two times; and then, in the plottings she had instituted, her far-seeing eyes had discerned the fact that of all allies, of all confidantes, there was none on the earth so adapted, both by nature and by her own peculiar perceptions, long ago read Lida Hall's disposition, which, being not unlike her own in some points, may explain their cold, calm friendship—and acquaintance as Lida Hall.

The position she occupied in the Roscoe household was simply splendid toward the furtherance of her plans; her frequent errands to The Towers was another satisfactory condition.

It had been in September, on one of Undine's visits—calls rather—at the Hall cottage, that she had seen Bertrand Haighte, in all his attractiveness and elegance; as he and Crystal had ridden along the road.

To one of her disposition, it was enough merely to see him; and, despite her existing engagement with Mr. Temple, she made up her mind on the moment that she admired him greatly. Then she thought of him, waking and sleeping, until at last she resolved to win him.

It seemed, perhaps, a most absurd and impossible idea; and to persons of ordinary conceptions, it doubtless would have been. But Undine Del Rose was a woman of no common intellect; one, had it been trained in a noble high-principled channel, would have made her a great, glorious specimen of womanhood. Therefore, the more impassable the barriers, the more determined she became to surmount them; until, her whole soul fired with love for Bertrand Haighte, and a consequent, natural hatred for Crystal Roscoe, she schemed and planned and arranged her mode of procedure.

Several weeks previous to the day when she had gone to Edenville, she had, on a day's visit at the Riverside Lodge—so Lida had named the unpretentious little four-room cottage—been invited by Lida to go over to The Towers with her, on an errand for Miss Hellice to Mrs. Haighte's housekeeper, for a recipe or something.

She had greedily accepted the invitation, knowing that, as Bertrand was over at Edenville, she could, perhaps, prevail on the housekeeper to show her through the house; something might accidentally transpire to assist her plans.

Her dress was as simple, apparently, as Lida's own; and in the plain brown silk traveling dress, with a large water-proof of Mrs. Hall's around her, and her hair, for a rarity, fastened in a coil, and a brown veil doubled over her face and hands, she truly concluded that if, by accident, she met Bertrand or any one else, they never would recognize her in after times when she might come boldly to The Towers in her new person!

Certainly Undine Del Rose was audaciously presumptive; but it was both her presumption and audacity that should help to carry her through this campaign against Crystal Roscoe's happiness.

Lida introduced her with all formality to the portly housekeeper, Mrs. Bowen; but her ears had mislaid her.

"Yes, I am pleased to meet your friend, Miss Rose. Won't you walk up to the dining-room, Lida? My receipts are all there."

Undine's heart swelled with joy at the accidental misunderstanding.

"It's fate in my favor already," she had whispered to herself.

"If you could spare the time, Mrs. Bowen, I would like to show this lady through the rooms."

"And that's just what I can't do, at all. I'm sorry, but there's all the maids gone to some fandango or other other down to York, and I'm awful busy foldin' up this linen."

"Perhaps you will trust me to show her through? You know me, Mrs. Bowen; I'll be particular."

The housekeeper deliberated a minute before she replied.

"Well, I don't know as I care. Of course if Miss Crystel trusts you among all her finery, I can where there's nothing but heavy furniture. Be careful now, Lida, to lock all the doors agen."

A fiery red had come in spots to Undine's cheeks at the half-suspicion, but she could afford to conceal it.

Together they went through the elegant, spacious apartments, while Undine noted every object they passed.

At last, having entered the corridor, out of which the doors of the family sleeping-rooms opened, Lida started to return to the dining-room, but Undine detained her.

"You haven't taken me in this yet?" She was pointing at Bertrand's room door.

"But those are strictly private; Mrs. Bowen might not like it. It is Mr. Bertrand's."

"But let us go in—please, Lida."

"No, indeed, I can not—"

"I tell you I am going in; give me the keys."

She was very calm, but Lida knew, of old, that red light in her eyes, as she took the keys from her hand.

"I want you to come in. I want you particularly."

And Lida followed her into Bertrand Haighte's sleeping apartment.

Undine gazed around her eyes growing tender as they rested on the lace-ruffled pillow where his head had rested; and with a soft, feet step she stole up to the low rosewood bedstead, and pressed a kiss on the unconscious linen.

"Undine!"

Lida called her name, half-angry, half-amused.

"Yes, it is because I love him so. Now, Lida Hall, I want you to swear to me to keep a secret for me. Will you do it?"

And then, standing in the very room where Bertrand had dreamed of Crystal so many times, Undine told Lida Hall her hopes, her resolves, her plans.

"And now, Lida Hall, I want you to aid me in my work. I will direct you in all things; you need have no mind of your own. Only be guided by me, and success will crown us both. Obey, and the day you call me Mrs. Haighte, I will give you a check for a thousand dollars; refuse, Lida Hall, and my lips shall disclose the secret of your life that I hold! You know of the child found choked to death; so do I. You know its mother, also its murderer? So do I. Now, Lida, which shall it be?"

The girl's face had changed to a dull ashy pallor as she looked up in Undine's pitiless, passionate eyes. Then she arose from the footstool, and went up to Undine.

"There can be no alternative. But I ask, is there blood to be shed? If so, you may kill me at your feet first."

"You committed murder once, are you soft-hearted now? But for your comfort—no, I do not think of any such desperate measures. Listen, let me tell you."

So she told her, in full detail, what must be done, in a low, eager voice that sent creeping shivers down the listener's back.

"You seem surprised that I have obtained this knowledge; but I tell you, Lida, I believe Satan himself has aided me. Some day I will tell you where I learned what to do; the next thing is to obtain possession of these papers."

Lida went slowly after Undine down the stairs; on the landing she turned.

"You go first, and don't forget what you are to do."

Then they went home, and in the gathering dusk, where no one ever met her, Undine went back to the city.

One month later she had returned; and Lida Hall met her with a parcel.

"I did not do as you directed, but have accomplished what you bade me do."

"Not as I said?"

"Fate planned it better. Mrs. Bowen has been sick of diphtheria, and just recovered—is still only convalescing. There was no one to nurse her, the girls being away on their vacation; my aunt is also on a visit, and Miss Crystel offered my services. I had the house to myself—what better chance could have been offered?"

Undine stood, with wide eyes, listening, a triumphant smile irradiating her face, as she clutched the papers.

"I was so afraid lawyer Allan was wrong; I have promised him five hundred dollars for his disclosure of the stronghold of this document. How little the Haightes dream of the peridy of their talented, fashionable executor!"

Lida leaned her head wearily on her hands, while Undine was greedily running over the faded papers, and still holding a ring between her fingers.

watched her away, as she hastened down the lonely roadside to the station.

There Undine hired a horse; and, arranging her slightly-disheveled toilet by the little cracked looking-glass in the ladies' saloon, she started forth to Edenville, on her mission of sin; from thence to The Towers, and then home, well satisfied as to her success.

But at home the days wore on, and there came no telegram from Lida Hall; she wondered what it meant; she knew she dared not play her false.

And then, when Bertrand Haighte had visited her, she had felt so glad she was home to receive him; after, when Clifford Temple had divulged her falsity to him, she determined to go to Lida and learn why she had been silent.

Then had come the summons; and, after writing a note to Mrs. St. Havens, stating that she had received an urgent message from a sick schoolmate in Boston, and did not know but that she might remain several weeks, she started on her career.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT WAS DONE.

It was true, Lida Hall was ill of diphtheria—dangerously ill; and because of the nearness of her wedding, Crystel Roscoe had availed herself of Lida's offer to send for Annette Willoughby.

Mrs. Hall had herself carried the message to the office, and afterward kept her own counsel, at Lida's suggestion, who told her that if Miss Crystel knew that Annette was in any way acquainted with Miss Del Rose, she might not employ her after the affairs so well known to the family had transpired.

Then the knowledge of Undine's visits had been kept quite still, at Undine's own request, long before this existing state of affairs; because her pride revolted from the idea of it being known that she visited a common servant. Therefore no suspicion existed at all; and even Mrs. Hall had not the first distant idea but that Annette Willoughby was merely recommended by Miss Del Rose.

The affair of her niece with Joe Willoughby was a sealed page to her, having occurred while Lida was a year away at Lowell, in the factories, while Undine had been at a Massachusetts school, and to whom Lida had applied for money and aid.

Thus Undine's tracks were covered completely; and she presented herself, not an ill-looking woman, with her light, flossy hair combed low on her forehead, and over it a lace cap, jaunty and rather pretty. She had pasted a long, narrow strip of black cloth-plaster across her cheek, between the lips and chin; her complexion was very dark, and a little sallow.

A pair of blue glasses she asked permission to wear, saying she had been employed on fine embroidery so long that she could not bear the light yet, but hoped to leave them off in a few weeks.

Tender-hearted Crystel told her it made not the slightest difference; hired her on Lida's recommendation, and went on preparing for the wedding-day.

Sunny-skied, frosty and quiet it dawned, and as Crystel drew aside the lace curtains and looked abroad upon beautiful Edenville, she wondered if ever bride went forth from a fairer spot.

A far off with the merrily-flowing Hudson between, were the rugged brown walls of the stately Towers, surrounded by the tall trees, and lying against the sleeping Highlands, that stretched up into the intense blue sky as if seeking to penetrate the happiness stored up for the bride.

That was a blissful hour Crystel spent in sweet communion with her maiden heart, alone with nature, on the morning of her wedding-day. There did not seem the tiniest cloud on her horizon; and even when she thought of the fascinating stranger and her ominous warning, she calmly smiled, and then whispered the psalm of praise that she had passed through the trial, hither though it was; for she loved Bertrand better than ever.

All the morning was the delightful bustle of preparation; Hellice moved hither and thither, guiding and directing all the affairs, while Crystel, alone of them all, she most deeply concerned, sat wrapt in a delicious, idle, dreamy reverie.

With the noon train the guests began to arrive, and the spacious mansion was a scene of merry pleasantry.

Later, after an informal lunch, came an early dinner; then the grand preparations for the ceremony that was to occur at the hour of eight, to be immediately followed by the departure of the married pair for the city, where they took an early morning steamer for Boston.

It was a few minutes past six when, complete in her wedding attire, Crystel lovingly dismissed her sister and Bertrand, who had been eagerly watching the process of part of the toilet, and assisting the blushing girl as her veil and wreath were being adjusted.

Now Crystel had begged them to leave her, and with a kiss and a whisper, Bertrand went away with Hellice.

All that hour the guests were gathering in the saloon; a delightfully joyous noise filled the mansion, yet still the door of Crystel's room remained locked. At exactly eight, General Roscoe tapped, while directly after him, in regular order, stood the bridesmaids; at the foot of the stairs Bertrand, with his groomsmen, awaited the party.

A second elapsed, and then the door was opened, and she came out, her veil drooping lowly over her elegant sunny-gold hair, her eyes cast down, even though her veil covered her face. She was pale as marble, but that was owing to excitement partly. She carried her filmy lace handkerchief in one white-gloved hand; and a tiny bouquet in the other. General Roscoe gave her his arm with all the gallantry of a man of thirty.

"We are waiting for you, my dear. The bishop came a quarter of an hour ago. One kiss, my little Crystel Roscoe, for the last time."

He lightly touched her forehead, without raising the cloud of lace, and then they went down.

At the foot of the staircase Bertrand took her from General Roscoe, and they promaded slowly through the long, dim parlors that looked like fairy-land in its fragrant, dusky gloom—Crystel had wanted it so, fearing lest she should be nervous with a half-hundred pairs of eyes watching her in a full glare of light. She gently pressed her arm, and he bent on her a glance of tenderest affection as they took their places on the floor—to be married; and in after days Bertrand shivered with horror when he remembered it.

The ceremony began; it ended, and Bertrand turned to kiss his bride.

"My wife, my darling wife!"

She trembled just a second, then threw up her veil, and, stepping forward, looked defiantly around.

Bertrand almost screamed.

"Good God, what does this mean? Undine Del Rose!"

A sudden rush forward of the guests; a murmur among them, as of an angry surge. Hellice sprang forward with a deathly pale face.

"Where's my sister, woman? how dare you, how dare you!"

She dashed through the guests, her long silken dress trailing after her, to her sister's room; while Bertrand and General Roscoe stood like much turned to statues.

Then the bridegroom aroused from the stupor he had been momentarily suffering, and advanced to Undine, who, calm, pale and collected, stood her well-won ground.

"Woman! fiend! you shall answer for this! General, let us to Crystel, the poor darling—hold, where is she?"

"In her room," she returned, calmly.

The men started to the door, whither half of the guests had rushed to learn of Crystel, when suddenly General Roscoe turned about.

"Don't let her go—ah, by Heavens, she has disappeared!"

It was even so; and on the carpet lay the veil and long shiny locks of golden hair. For a second, a silence, amounting to fearful intenseness, reigned; then General Roscoe sprang to an open French window.

"She has gone through this, the demoness!"

It seemed true, for a fragment of white satin was clinging to a jagged point in the iron balcony.

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER THE BRIDAL.

HELlice, closely followed by Bertrand and General Roscoe, had hurried up the stairs to the door of Crystel's room; it was unlocked, and they rushed in, fearing, wondering what they should see.

And then, when Hellice had reached midway the room, a loud scream burst from her lips, as, rigid as marble, with the blood curdling round her heart, she met her sister, coming up through the dim distance of the long suite, so pale, so pitiful!

"I am so bewildered, sister! where have I been? where is Bertrand?"

She passed her hand over her forehead in a gesture of painful self-inquiry.

And just at that juncture the startled members of the household, headed by General Roscoe and Bertrand, followed by a number of the guests, entered the room, to discover the cause of the shrieks that had awakened them.

General Roscoe suddenly paused in his hasty entrance, as his eyes fell on his youngest daughter's figure; and a silence of fear and awe fell on them all; a silence that Crystel was the first to break.

"Oh, father, won't you tell me what it means? I surely have not been ill, have I? or how else came my hair short?"

And then General Roscoe caught her in his arms, and the spell seemed lifted off them all.

"My child, what does it mean? Where did you leave Bertrand—how came this splendid hair short so closely?"

"Oh, Bertrand! where has he gone? why doesn't he come and see if I am ready for the wedding? It seems as if I was all dressed once, and waiting for you to take on the door. I know I felt very faint all at once—I suppose it has only been a dream."

"A dream!" thundered the General, "it is an infernal game! Crystel, my child, you have not been married to Bertrand Haighte! The ceremony was performed, but between him and another—oh, God! we can't see through this. Crystel, my daughter, Bertrand has married some one else! but it shall all be made right."

She stood like a statue of marble.

"Some—one—else?"

Slowly the words dropped from her lips. Then Hellice, with her quick returning foresight, stood up and spoke, quietly and convincingly.

"It has been a plot; I think I comprehend at least a portion of it. Bertrand, will you attend Crystel to another room? and see that John goes immediately after Dr. Bellanger? I will write to have the woman arrested!"

But Bertrand could speak no words of cheering assurance to his love; for, when Hellice turned toward him, they all saw that he had fainted just as he had ascended the stairs.

Several hours later, when Bertrand had aroused from the deadly swoon, he explained, as best he could, the probable reason for the strange affair.

Afterward, so soon as the excitement subsided, the guests retired to their rooms, while Clifford Temple, pale and speechless from the supreme horror of the occasion, paced up and down the front piazza till the gray dawn.

Up stairs, in Crystel's room, Annette Willoughby was sitting in the gloom, watching her mistress as she slept, and listening to the measured tread below that she knew so well. The next morning she wrote a short note, and this was its contents:

"MR. SAMUEL GREENLEAF: Please direct and drop the inclosed letter in the box, and oblige A. W."

The "inclosed" was a letter directed in cipher.

"For your sweetheart, eh, Annie?" the letter man had said, when she gave it to him; and she laughed and simpered.

But several hours later, Lawyer Allan inquired, at Station C if there was a letter there for his coachman, Samuel Greenleaf; and then, an hour later still, he mailed the "inclosed" at another station; and when he had translated it, in accordance with the cipher he had been entrusted with by Undine Del Rose, it read:

"Bertrand Haighte, The Towers."

And Lawyer Allan rubbed his hands, and thought not only of the fat fees Miss Del Rose paid, not of his own consummate perfidy and treachery to the Haightes, but that the splendid Undine had promised to consider him, in a matrimonial view.

At midday, Bertrand received his letter, and this was what it said:

"If you want to be righted, come to the Oriental Hotel to-day, at four P. M. UNDINE."

That afternoon, Annette had gone into her mistress's room just after midday.

"Could you spare me till dinner, to-day, Miss Crystel? I have an errand in Brooklyn that's very particular."

She went down to New York on the three o'clock train; purchased a walking suit complete at Mme. Oliphant's establishment, and then, still in her disguise, went to the hotel.

Once in the room she had asked for, she

carefully removed all traces of "Annette Willoughby"; then called the waiter and bade him show Mr. Haighte—whom the man knew well—to her. Then she sat down and waited.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 58.)

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BY JOE JOT, JR.

Dear girl, I thank you for the gift,
These slippers fine and neat,
Which came so happily to hand
And went so soon to feet.

The flowers bloom richly on the toes,
By fairy hands inwoven;
No summer fragrance do they shed,
But oh, how sweet with love!

The golden braid on velvet laid,
In pretty spirals crawl—
Indeed, how beautiful these are,
To be a size too small!

And sound about the heels entwined
The tendrils of the grape;
Alas, that I should put them on
And put them out of shape!

The Felon's Wife.

OR,
THE SIREN'S SECRET.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.

"My God! what must I do?" Can it be that— But no, he is dead, years since. It can not be that— I and yet it says *my secret*! that he will unmask me!" murmured a lady seated in a richly-furnished chamber of a mansion situated in the more aristocratic portion of the "Crescent City."

She held a note tightly in her hand, and raising it, glanced over its contents for the twentieth time.

"EMELINE MURRAY:

"One who knows you well, who can tell you all the hidden secrets of your past life, your real name as well as that of your services. As a proof, I need only mention the two names—*Alfred Maeder* and *Jennie Foster*. If you consent to assist me, all is well. If not, I will unmask you and show the old dotard who hopes to marry his daughter's governess what a serpent of evil he has harbored. Meet me at nine o'clock this night, at the foot of the grounds, and I will tell you the conditions upon which I will keep silence. If you fail, I will expose your secret."

"Can it be that he—my husband—is still alive? I will meet him at the foot of the garden to-night—I must!" murmured the lady, in an audible tone.

Then, alarmed at the sound of her voice, she glanced wildly around the room. Nothing met her gaze to alarm her, and then slipping—as she thought—the note in her pocket, left the chamber. Scarcely had the door closed, when the curtains of the bed were raised and a comical object slowly crawled from its covert and hastily clutched the note.

The new-comer was a diminutive negro girl, grotesquely deformed, but with a face expressive of cunning curiosity. Turning the paper around and over, the negress peered at the writing with an expression of baffled inquisitiveness.

"I al'ays said dat Mis' Liny was a snake—a sar-pint—an' now I knows it! She gwine to marry of marse, an' done got one of man a'ready! Lord! I wish I knowed how to read dis yere. Looks jest like a lot o' mashed bugs, it does. She's gwine to see de feller w'a' rit dis yere? *S'm' I!*" and then the darky tightly rolled up the note, and placing it in her breast, silently stole from the apartment.

That night, a little before the appointed hour, a female figure, closely wrapped in a heavy shawl, left the house and glided stealthily down the broad gravel walk leading to the foot of the spacious, park-like grounds. In a few minutes she was startled by a man leaping over the high stone wall, who approached her.

He was tall, and evidently disguised; a slouched felt hat covered his brow, and he wore a long cloak, that he kept close about his face. He spoke, in a low, clear tone:

"So, Mrs. Maeder, you concluded to grant my request?"

"For an interview—yes," replied the lady, her tones faltering, as if with surprise, or illy-concealed fear.

"Good! the rest will follow. First, before telling you my plans, let me recall the past, to prove that I am no impostor. Once upon a time—to begin in the good old way, you see—there lived an angelic couple, man and wife. He was a counterfeiter, and she helped him about the work. He was finally detected and sentenced to fifteen years' hard labor. That was nine years since. He attempted to escape, and—so at least the papers had it—was shot dead while swimming the river. His body was never found.

"This woman finally went South. Of her life in the mean time I shall not speak. It would hardly bear repeating. She came South, and at last secured a position as governess in a wealthy gentleman's family—Edward Lansing was his name—and the old man fell in love with her. The time was set for the wedding, and all preparations made. Bah! what is the use of this dallying? You are this convict's wife. You have never had a divorce. What if I tell Lansing who and what you are? Will your life of forced widowhood bear inspection, think you?"

"Who are you?" faltered the woman.

"Never mind. But look; do you recognize this portrait? It was once accounted very like Alfred Maeder, and as he spoke, the cloaked stranger produced a small daguerreotype and held it before her.

"What do you ask of me?" she hoarsely added, raising her head with a subdued air.

"Just this. I know that old Lansing has a large sum of money in the house that he keeps locked up in an iron safe. I need that, and as I can not open the safe without making enough noise to alarm the household, I wish you to help me. Can you get the keys? Wait—do not speak hastily; for unless you hand them to me this night, sure as death I will unmask you!"

"I can get them. He keeps them in a drawer at the head of his bed while sleeping. I will get them—when?"

"As soon as he sleeps. I will be on the watch about eleven. If you succeed, bring them here. If you do not—"

"Forbear your threats. I am in your power and can not refuse. But who are you?"

"I was called Alf. Maeder, but I am now—well, never mind. It is hardly wise to mention names."

"You promise never to molest me after this? For unless you swear by all that you hold sacred, never to betray by word, act, or sign, what you know of the past, I will refuse to do this deed, and let you do your worst," firmly cried Emeline, or Jennie Maeder.

"I promise. You know that I never yet broke my word when I swore by the memory of my dead mother. I swear never to trouble you again, if this plan works well," earnestly, almost solemnly replied the man.

"I will trust you. Be here at the time set, and you shall not be disappointed."

"Very well—but no treachery!"

"You can trust me if I trust you," simply replied the woman, turning and gliding away, with the dark shawl shrouding her pallid features.

Alfred Maeder turned and scaled the wall, not noticing the little dusky figure that lay curled up beneath a bush, in close proximity to where the dark plot had been formed, having doubtless overheard every word of the conversation. When the sound of his footsteps died away, the little negro girl crept out of the bush, and stood for a moment scratching her caput with wonderful vigor.

"I knowed it—I did! She's a sar-pint, she is, now, fer shure! I'm jist agwine right straight off 'nd tell of marse. Bu the won't b'lieve me 'less I show him dat paper wid de smashed bugs on it. I'll go git dat fust!"

And then the negress darted away, and in a few minutes more had told Anna Lansing, her young mistress, what she had heard, and the two were closeted with the old gentleman for some time.

At the usual hour Edward Lansing proceeded to his chamber, outwardly calm and composed, but his face bore the traces of a fearful struggle. The cup of fancied bliss had been rudely dashed from his lips, and the scales fell from his eyes.

It was hard for him to believe that the lovely woman was such a crime-stained and hardened creature, but he could see no excuse. He had resolved to completely unmask her, and after placing the safe key as usual in the drawer, he extinguished the light and feigned slumber.

After a time the door was noiselessly opened and Emeline entered, having a shaded lamp. Quickly securing the key she retreated.

Lansing listened intently until he heard the inner door close, and then resuming his garments and securing a brace of pistols, he crept down to the library and concealed himself.

He had not long to wait, for the guilt-leagued couple speedily returned to the house. Cautiously entering the library, Maeder opened the slide of a dark lantern. By its bright rays, with the aid of the key, he opened the safe door.

At the same instant Lansing uttered a low whistle, and the door flew open. There stood Anna and Sally, bearing lights.

"Hold!" sternly cried Lansing, threatening the robber with his pistol. "Move a step and you are a dead man. Be quiet and tell me what all this means, and I may allow you to go free. Emeline, is this man your husband? Enough! I see by your face that my information was correct. I am not love-blinded, now!" he added, bitterly.

"Mercy—for the love of God, mercy!" pleaded the unmasked siren, falling upon her knees and raising her clasped hands. "He forced me—it was my love for you that drove me to it!"

"Peace! had you loved me, for myself instead of my wealth, you would have dared all—have told me your past and trusted to my love, instead of plunging still deeper into crime. Thank God! my eyes were opened in time! But you shall have mercy. You and your husband may go free. And I will assist you to leave the city."

"See—I give you a thousand dollars of the sum you sinned for; take it and be gone. I will send your clothes and property to the outer gate. But as you value your lives—or liberty—do not let me ever see either of your faces again. Go!" sternly cried the old man, pointing to the door.

The two outcasts silently left the building, and after sending the wraps and property as promised, the house was closed. The unmasked siren and her felon husband were never more met by either father or daughter.

Camp-Fire Yarns.

How "Bruin" Adams Saved the Post.

BY RALPH RINGWOOD.

"Who is your friend?" asked an officer of the post where we were stopping for the day, as my companion walked away toward the outer gate.

"That is 'Bruin' Adams, captain, a relation of your old friend Grizzly."

"Is it possible? Well, I have said that I would rather see him than any man alive," exclaimed the officer, gazing after the stalwart figure of my friend as he slowly walked off.

"You have, of course, heard of the great service he performed for this post some ten years ago? It was before I came out, but the story has been so often told me that I almost feel as though I had been here when the incident happened."

"I have heard of and know so many remarkable deeds performed by my friend, that I can not remember all. Perhaps, if you were to relate the circumstance, I could better give you an answer."

"With pleasure," promptly replied the captain. "It was told me by Colonel C—himself, and you know he is not the man to be led into any exaggeration of facts, however great his regard for the actor therein may be."

"The Government had, for the last half a dozen years, shamefully neglected this post; in fact, it had, to use the colonel's favorite expression, permitted it and its affairs to 'run down at the heels,' until, at the time of which I speak, it was in no condition whatever to withstand an Indian attack with the slightest hope of successful resistance."

"What with the garrison dying off, deserting, and being regularly discharged, the men constantly going out and none coming in, it soon came to be known that there remained not one-half the regular, required force."

"And then the defenses were in miserable condition; and more, and far worse than all else, the ammunition was actually permitted to run almost entirely out."

"There never was such a case of criminal negligence, and I have thought since that somebody was surely to blame."

"Such was the condition of affairs, when, one night, or rather morning—for it was long past the middle watches—the sentinel on duty at the gate announced a man without, who desired admittance and an instant interview with the commandant."

"It proved to be a Moque Indian, and he had evidently traveled far and fast."

"His news was of the utmost importance; indeed, it ultimately had to do with the saving of the post and all in it."

"The Northern Indians, I mean by that those tribes lying north of the fort, were preparing for their yearly foray into the Mexican and outlying settlements, and it was their purpose to include this post in their wide sweep, and, if possible, sweep it off the face of the earth."

"That was about it, I suppose."

"The Moque had been sent in by a young hunter who had just returned from a scout into the Indian country, where, by a daring venture, such as we often read of, but seldom see in reality, he had learned the plans and routes of the great foray."

"He, himself, had gone eastward to warn the posts above us, and would then hasten down to give what assistance might be in his power."

"There was not much to be done in the way of preparation, from the simple fact that nothing could be done."

"They either had to desert the place and

"To cross the range of mountains lying north of the fort, the Indians would be compelled to pass through Kennedy's canon, a narrow, rugged defile, in certain parts of which not more than three or four warriors could ride abreast."

"He offered to take as many of the garrison as the colonel could spare, and there await the attacking party."

"A stand could be made for some hours at least, and then, when too hard pressed, they could fall back upon the fort."

"When Colonel C— came to count up the force at his command, and found that he could scarce spare twenty men for this dangerous duty, he hesitated a while, but finally, seeing the absolute necessity, he reluctantly gave the order to call for volunteers."

"The men were all old regulars, and they had been closely 'inspecting' the young stranger who was to lead them, and must have been well satisfied, for every fellow of them stepped forward at the call."

"But twenty, however, could be spared, and these were selected by the colonel himself."

"At midnight the little band filed out the gate, and at once struck off at a gallop in the direction of the canon."

"What took place there has been graphically told by Sergeant Collins, a grim, gruff old Scotchman, who was never before known to praise anybody or any thing, but who was, in this case, exceedingly enthusiastic."

"The young scout posted his little band with great skill, keeping always in view the possibility of sudden defeat, and therefore leaving a wide hole to creep out of in case of reverses."

"For this purpose he dismounted his men behind a slight eminence, some two hundred yards from the mouth of the canon, leaving the horses there in charge of one man, while with the others he advanced to the opening."

"Here he left ten more, and with the remaining nine he pushed further on to where the gulch suddenly narrowed to a width of less than a dozen feet."

"At this point the walls of the canon ran up perpendicularly upon either side to a great height, while the bottom was thickly strewn with great fragments of rock that had, from time to time, fallen down from above."

"Darkness slowly passed away, and at length the gray of coming dawn began to steal down the chasm."

"Behind the rocks, with rifles thrown forward for instant use, crouched the regulars,

"Again and again the repeating rifles told with fatal accuracy, and then the regulars. Here the fight lasted for more than three hours, and the canon was piled high with dead and wounded warriors."

"Then came the retreat, and the gallant band fell back to the mouth, bearing their two wounded comrades with them."

"Two more hours were gained before the Indians renewed the attack, and then two more before the second retreat to the horses, and thence to the fort."

"In both combats your friend was, as they described him, a perfect devil, I mean in the way of fighting. And these old regulars came to look upon him as something rather out of the usual line."

"He saved the post by his skill and bravery, for in less than an hour after the Indians invested it, and before they had yet struck a blow, the cavalry from Fillmore came thundering across the plain, and in ten minutes after there wasn't an Indian to be seen."

"I tell you," concluded the captain, "your friend is a man that any one ought to be proud to know, so just come, if you please, and introduce me."

Beat Time's Notes.

HANDKERCHIEF FLIRTATION.

To blow your handkerchief with a dirty nose—I mean to blow your nose with a dirty handkerchief—means, my love is pure."

To drop your handkerchief on the sidewalk and pass on without noticing it, means, you are a blamed fool."

To extract a handkerchief from the south hind-pocket of a gentleman in front of you, means, I am much obliged to you."

To borrow a lady's handkerchief and blow your nose on it, means, you are my heart's delight."

To wave a handkerchief full of eggs above your head, means, I'm drunk."

To cram your handkerchief into your right-hand boot, means, I'm desirous of an introduction."

To draw a raveled handkerchief across your brow, means, I'm a-frayed."

To flourish a handkerchief which is so full of holes that it would be impossible to get another one in without making the handkerchief over, means, I'm dreadfully bloated."

To cram your handkerchief into your mouth and extract it through your labarboard ear, means, I'm smitten."

To wave your handkerchief at every lady who has occasion to use hers on the street, means, you are making an ass of yourself."

SAMPSON was a Jew, the son of his uncle's brother Sam; a distant relation of his father's and intimately connected with himself. He used to sell store duds in New York, until he began to let his hair grow, which made him very strong—with bear's grease. He got strong, too, trying to hold the buttons on his ready-made suits, and then he sometimes had to call for help. He once broke the lower jaw of a cast-iron lion which had terribly frightened the little school children. He once got mad at some Jersey farmers, and to take revenge, he put turpentine on the tails of an imagination full of dogs, set fire to them and started them through their corn-fields; then he pitched into the farmers, and smote them hip and thigh with his foot, was arrested by New York policeman and delivered to the Jerseymen, when he broke his \$25,000 bonds, and killed them all with the jaw-bone of a male relative of the mule, or, as many as he could catch he boned. They chased him out of Newark soon after, so suddenly that he took the gate of the city with him. He then fell in love with a girl who cut his hair off and sold it to a wig-maker, and an eye-doctor tried to cure his sore eyes and they came out, and somewhat impaired his sight. He afterwards met his death by accidentally leaning against the walls of a building which was built by a contractor, and which fell, killing him instantly, thereby depriving him of any more amusement for the balance of his life.

A YOUNG goat is a kid, and a young kid is a kidney; if not, then why not? and if not why, then wherefore any more?

WHEN a man withdraws from the world to live alone in the wilderness, he may be considered as being hermitically sealed to his fate. Patent applied for.

I NOTICE that I am sadder when I'm sorrowful, and that I am maddest when I sing—so is everybody else that hears me.

CHARLES DICKENS wrote Copper David-field, Our Mutual House, Bleak Friend, Nicholas Dorrit, Little Nickleby, Great Times, Hard Expectations, Barnaby Rudge and others, but there are a great many other books which he didn't write.

WHEN a beggar applies at our door, how pleasant it is to refer him to a neighbor, with a panegyric on his great benevolence.

A GRINDSTONE would not answer very well for a breast-pin, although it may be called a stone of the first water. They are much used in carpenter shops, but they are more common in private dwellings, where they are used solely to grind the implement called a husband's nose. They grind very slow but they grind very sure. You can not grind more than a dozen barrels of flour a day on a grindstone.

I HAVE fifty dollars in one pocket and twenty-five dollars in the other. [This is for illustration, for, to tell the truth, there isn't a cent in the remotest confines of those pockets.] I owe one man thirty-seven dollars and another fifteen dollars. I owe a good many others, but these in particular. I take the money out of one pocket and put it with the other; now, would it not be an example of simple abstraction if I paid either of them, and wouldn't it be a pure example in addition to get them to renew the notes and make them a little more while they had pens in their hands? Please go to the blackboard and figure this up.

If you subtract the hind legs from a grasshopper, there will not be much of the grasshopper left. It is a different kind of a bird from an ash hopper, one being strong on the jump and the other strong on the leg.

I TAKE up my pen again to remark that cobblers are not made out of cork-cobs, so if any one labors under this impression he's wrong. Yours and so forth-ly.

BEAT TIME.



THE FELON'S WIFE.